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THE  
IRISH CONVENTION

AND

SINN FEIN





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AND  
SINN FEIN

IN CONTINUATION OF "A HISTORY OF THE  
IRISH REBELLION OF 1916"

BY  
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## PREFATORY NOTE

THIS book is written in continuation of "A History of the Irish Rebellion of 1916," by the same authors. In it, as in its predecessor, their attitude is, to the best of their capacity for political detachment, purely historical. They endeavour "to exhibit, not to criticise, conflicting tendencies in present-day Ireland. Their especial purpose is to place the work of the Irish Convention in its due relation to contemporary events in Irish history.





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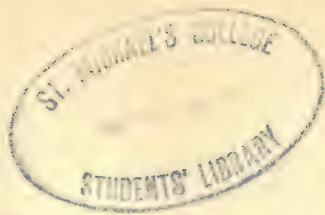
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# THE IRISH CONVENTION AND SINN FEIN

## CHAPTER I.

### THE ORIGIN OF THE IRISH CONVENTION

WE ended our "History of the Irish Rebellion of 1916" with the question—"Would the influence of the Rebellion produce, in spite of the failure of the first impulse in that direction, a secure and lasting Irish settlement? Or else——?" That History was brought to a temporary close with the date of July 28th, 1916, the date on which Mr. Asquith, in the House of Commons, announced the final failure of Mr. Lloyd George's attempt to negotiate a settlement on the basis of the policy known in Ireland as "Partition"—the exclusion of the six counties of Ulster from the Home Rule Act of 1914. The present book continues the political history of Ireland from that point down to the issue of its report by the Irish Convention entrusted in the summer of 1917 with the task of endeavouring to find an answer to the question with which our earlier volume closed.

Sir Horace Plunkett played so important a part in the main event described in this book that we may suitably begin it by quoting his compact account of the political situation as it existed in the summer of 1916. The future chairman of the

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Convention had strongly opposed the partition scheme and had proposed as an alternative that the Irish Government should be put "into commission"—its administration to be placed in the hands of an Executive Council, consisting of Irishmen of recognised standing, drawn from different parts of Ireland, and fairly representative of the main interests and currents of opinion in the country, while any Irish legislation which was necessary would remain in the Imperial Parliament, where it would be looked after by the Irish representatives. In urging this proposal, which was not adopted, against the partition scheme, Sir Horace Plunkett wrote in a public letter in June, 1916:—"The present state of the Irish question must make the angels weep, though they may indulge in an occasional laugh at the anomalies with which the tragedy is relieved. The Irish Government has been swept away by a Rebellion made in Germany, with which country Ireland is at war. Downing Street and Dublin Castle were equally surprised by events elaborately planned in New York and Berlin. Home Rule has been placed on the Statute Book to please the "South and West"; its operation was suspended for fear of stirring up trouble in Ulster. The North, where armed opposition to Parliament, one of the chief causes of the Rebellion, originated, remained quiet; in no Southern constituency affected had its representatives in Parliament any knowledge of, or responsibility for, the rising. So, while Home Rule is the law of the land for North and South alike, both are under Martial Law."

Attempting to set out briefly and clearly the main facts of the situation with which Mr. Lloyd George had to deal, Sir Horace Plunkett proceeded:—"Ireland is quiet at the moment, but the military executions and deportations have widened and deepened the influence of *Sinn Fein*. A



Rebellion, which was condemned at the time of its action, has set in in favour of the promoters of the occurrence by ninety per cent. of the Nationalists. The opposition to the Parliamentary Party is increasing steadily in Ireland, and might take the form of a dangerous revolt against Constitutional methods. In the United States, we are told in the Press, the German-Irish alliance is trying to use Irish unrest for the purpose of stopping the export of munitions to the Allies. The enemies both of the British Government and of the Irish Parliamentary Party are proclaiming that Ireland is again going to be tricked out of Home Rule, that the Act on the Statute Book is a mere invoice, and that there is no intention of delivering the goods. And then there is Ulster, where Sir Edward Carson's followers, who two years ago threatened Civil War rather than submit to the will of Parliament, feel that their attitude has been justified by the Rebellion, and are determined that, at any rate, so far as the six wealthiest and most progressive counties of their province are concerned, the goods shall not be delivered." In these circumstances Sir Horace Plunkett described the task with which Mr. Lloyd George found himself confronted as a three-fold task. "He had to dispel once and for all any doubt there may be as to the good faith of the Government in the matter of Home Rule, to put an end to the possibility of Civil War, and to improve the chances of a satisfactory final settlement of the Irish Question after the war." In that task Mr. Lloyd George failed, and no serious attempt to fulfil it was made for a full year afterwards. Sir Horace Plunkett's description, however, may be permitted to stand as a tolerably faithful estimate in the political situation in Ireland in the summer of 1916, after the failure of the first attempt at settlement which immediately followed the Rebellion.

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Superficially nothing was changed. The form of Castle Government, which Mr. Asquith had described as finally discredited, was completely restored. To general surprise Lord Wimborne had been reappointed Lord Lieutenant. Mr. Birrell was succeeded as Chief Secretary by Mr. Duke, the Unionist member for Exeter, about whom little was known except that his desire for settlement was sincere; and Irish politicians were sympathetic towards him at the outset of his difficult career. The country remained under Martial Law, and the military authority was invested with greater responsibility than the civil. Sir John Maxwell, who had suppressed the Rebellion with an iron hand, was retained as Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland. A popular demand for his removal had sprung up immediately after the suppression of the Rebellion, and continued in gathering volume. This demand was not met until the following November, when he was succeeded by Sir Bryan Mahon, an Irish General who had commanded the Irish Division in Gallipoli; but as a concession to the Nationalist Party Lord Lansdowne announced in the House of Lords on July 12th that Sir Neville Chamberlain, who had asked to be relieved of his duties, was about to be succeeded as Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary by "a gallant officer whose record inspires us with confidence, and who will, we believe, be regarded favourably by all political parties in Ireland." This officer proved to be Brigadier-General John Aloysius Byrne. The duties of administering the restraints imposed under Martial Law devolved, of course, more intimately upon the Constabulary than upon the Military, and the Government apparently imagined that its administration would be less unacceptable in the hands of an Inspector-General who was an Irishman and a Roman Catholic.



By this time, however, public feeling in Nationalist Ireland had passed into a condition in which the question of the *personnel* of administration was of little practical consequence. In all her history Ireland has seen no more remarkable revulsion of political opinion than that which followed the Rebellion of 1916. The Rebellion occurred at a moment when the first fine careless rapture of Nationalist Ireland's emotional war interest was wholly spent, and the country was in a state of reaction to war—weariness and disillusion. It was in this atmosphere that the disaffection which issued in the Rebellion came to a head. But, though strategically the Rebellion was serious, politically it was, in itself, trivial. It was not, except indirectly and remotely, a product of the political philosophy known before its occurrence as *Sinn Féin*. That political philosophy made its limited appeal first to a small company of writers and scholars, and next to some extent to the smaller *bourgeoisie* of the cities. *Sinn Féin* nationalism was *doctrinaire*; it could not acquire the character of agitation. The Rebellion of 1916, on the other hand, had behind it the driving force of economic misery, together with that strong emotional nationalism which has always been a characteristic of the very poor in Irish cities. It was primarily and essentially a revolt of the Dublin slums, using as its military instrument the Citizen Army, founded by James Larkin during the great strike of 1912—a revolt of the Dublin slums in alliance with the neo-Fenianism surviving in the secret society known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and using as its military instrument the Irish Volunteers. The Rebellion, then, was not in any exact definition of the term *Sinn Féin*, and the political philosophy which bore that name was before it of only moderate consequence in Irish life. The

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Rebellion failed so completely and so early for the precise reason, very largely, that the great mass of the Irish people did not approve of it, and had not been consulted about it; a majority condemned Pearse and Connolly as impractical visionaries. Nevertheless, a very short time after the outbreak *Sinn Fein* was a potent force in Ireland, and a very large part, perhaps a majority, of the Irish people gloried in avowing themselves *Sinn Fein*.

A political phenomenon so remarkable, and destined to exert such a large influence in the development of political events in Ireland, is worthy of something more than superficial study. "The truth is," wrote Mr. James Stephens on the morrow of the rising, "that Ireland is not cowed. She is excited a little. She is gay a little. She was not with the Rebellion, but in a few weeks she will be, and her heart, which was withering, will be warmed by the knowledge that men have thought her worth dying for. . . . If freedom is to come to Ireland, as I believe it is, then the Easter Insurrection was the only thing which could have happened. I write as an Irishman, and am momentarily leaving out of account every other consideration. If, after all her striving, freedom had come to her as a gift, as a peaceful present such as is sometimes given away with a pound of tea, Ireland would have accepted the gift with shamefacedness, and have felt that her centuries of revolt had ended in something very like ridicule. The blood of brave men had to sanctify such a consummation if the national imagination was to be stirred to the dreadful business which is the organising of freedom. . . . Following on such tameness, failure might have been predicted, or at least feared, and war (let us call it war for the sake of our pride) was due to Ireland before she could enter gallantly into her inheritance. We might have crept into liberty like some domestic-



ated man, whereas now we may be allowed to march into freedom with the honours of war . . . .”

It follows necessarily from her history that the popular historical heroes of Nationalist Ireland after the semi-legendary figures of bardic times, and those first opponents of foreign invasion such as Brian Boroimhe, are the men who have resisted in arms the domination of England—who are, in other words, “rebels.” Art McMurrough Kavanagh, who waged successful war against Richard II.; the long line of Geraldines from Garrett in the time of the Tudors to Lord Edward; the O’Neills and O’Donnells of Ulster, whose century of intermittent rebellion culminated in the flight of the “wild geese” at the beginning of the seventeenth century, to be renewed half a century later; Sarsfield in the war of William and James (who ranks as a “rebel” in English history); Wolfe Tone and the Emmets a hundred years later; Mitchel, Smith O’Brien, Meagher and the other “Young Irelanders” of 1848; James Stephens and the Fenian leaders of 1867—these are the national heroes of Ireland. The more recent change in the political struggle between Ireland and Great Britain from the sphere of physical force to constitutional action had not effected their memory. Nationalist Ireland has never admitted the validity of the claim that, as an essential article of any treaty of political peace with England, as an earnest of her loyalty to the British connexion, she should make, as it were, a formal act of self-humiliation, a formal repudiation of her history of rebellions and of her famous rebels. “She may enter the Council of Empire,” wrote Kettle, “provided that she enters on her knees and leaves her history outside as a shameful burden. This is not a demand that can be conceded, or that men make on men . . . . In days rougher than ours, when a blind and tyrannous England sought to drown the national

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faith of Ireland in a sea of blood, there arose among our fathers men who annulled that design. We cannot undertake to cancel the names of these men from our calendar. We are no more ashamed of them than the constitutional England of modern times is ashamed of her Langtons and De Monteforts, her Sydneys and her Hampdens." With that tradition behind them the men of 1916 must in any case have commanded, whether their action was justified or not justified, approved by the great mass of the Irish people or not approved, a natural place in the popular imagination in the illustrious succession of Ireland's historic "rebels." That appeal to tradition, to sentiment, must in any circumstances have been potent.

"Ireland was not with the Rebellion, but in a few weeks she will be." Mr. James Stephens's words were written before the immediate sequel to the Rebellion. It was, in fact, a matter not of a few months, but of a few, and a very few, days. The events of those few days made a great part of Nationalist Ireland "with the Rebellion," with a swiftness, and to a degree, which, before they took place, no man in Ireland could have contemplated. The men of 1916, it has been said, must in any case have taken a natural place in the popular imagination in the illustrious succession of Ireland's historic "rebels." The exaction from them of the extreme penalty for their offence at once invoked, and invested their persons with, all the ancient memories for which that succession stood. It replaced in a moment an appeal to reason with an irresistible appeal to sentiment. The justice, or even the expediency, of the execution of the rebel leaders, the sentences of penal servitude, the wholesale arrests and deportations, announced day after day without publication of the evidence which justified the infliction of the capital penalty, from behind the closed doors of Field Courts-Martial,



are matters of controversy with which this historical record is not concerned. Their effect on a great mass of Irish opinion, which read of them, as a commentator entirely unsympathetic with the Rebellion wrote at the time, "with something of the feeling of helpless rage with which one would watch a stream of blood dripping from under a closed door," is a matter of historical fact. To this mass of Irish opinion, as an immediate result of them, the memory of the thousands of Irish soldiers who had died in the face of the enemy in France and Flanders, in Gallipoli and Macedonia, suddenly became less real and vital than the memory of the dozen rebels who died at the hands of British firing parties in the barrack yards of Dublin. From that moment the old and deep but hitherto submerged emotions resumed full sway of the national imagination and jostled out the novel and superficial emotions induced by the war and Ireland's earlier participation in it. All the past history of Nationalist Ireland recoiled upon her; a large part of her people were suddenly back in the ancient fierce mood of quarrel with England.

Two circumstances tended to confirm this mood induced by the aftermath of the Rebellion. One was the renewed agitation which sprang up immediately after its suppression for the application of conscription to Ireland. The opposition to conscription, deriving in part from the repugnance of Irishmen to compulsion in any form, in part from the fact that the conception of the war as "Ireland's war," as the phrase went, had never struck any deep roots in the country, in part from the view that Ireland with a declining population could not economically afford the drain of manhood involved, but deriving chiefly from the belief that the principle of nationality was vitally involved in the question, and that acceptance of it

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would fatally compromise the Irish national claim —this opposition was now confirmed by the fact that the Rebellion was partly inspired by the belief that the application of conscription was imminent, so that the memory of the dead remained a continuing inspiration to resist it. The other circumstance was the Nationalist Parliamentary Party's acceptance of the principle of "partition" in the abortive negotiations for a settlement in the summer of 1916. Sir Horace Plunkett, at this time, expressed himself as fearing, "that the Government, relying on their knowledge of British public opinion and of the Parliamentary situation, would find that they had wholly misjudged the feelings of the Irish people, and that their proposal for setting up a government without consulting the Irish electorate would arouse an opposition which would drive tens of thousands of moderate men into the *Sinn Fein* camp."

These considerations serve to explain the extraordinary revulsion of popular feeling which swept over the country after the Rebellion in the early summer of 1916. The fact that, though the Rebellion in its origin was only indirectly and remotely *Sinn Fein*, this revulsion of feeling associated itself with that political theory is easily intelligible. The actual authors of the Rebellion were dead or imprisoned; the Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers were disbanded and their organisations suppressed; the moving spirits of the Irish Republican Brotherhood had retired into their mysterious obscurity. These rallying points for the new and vastly swollen disaffection were gone; but the outbreak had become loosely associated in the public mind with *Sinn Fein*; the *Sinn Fein* idea was "in the air"; and the revulsion of popular feeling naturally grouped itself about it. From this point then, rather than from anything antecedent to the Rebellion, or even from the



Rebellion itself, we may trace the emergence of a new and incalculable factor in the political life of Ireland. In the period immediately after the Rebellion, and during the remainder of the year 1916, *Sinn Fein* was scarcely more than an emotion, a sentiment, an "atmosphere," a stream of tendency not yet canalised in a policy. It was a latent potentiality rather than a concrete actuality. One was conscious of a novel presence in Irish thought, oppressive, pervasive, but impalpable.

There was in this period no exact measure of estimation of its influence, or even of its scope, though it was apparent that it was widely diffused. Incidents there were as straws in the wind—most significant, perhaps, the election in August by the Gaelic League, which was in no sense directly implicated in the Rebellion, of its new President in the person of Professor Eoin (John) MacNeill, who was at the time serving a life sentence for alleged complicity in the rising. Of overt "manifestations" of the new spirit of revolt there was none of any consequence. The widespread wearing of Republican badges; a certain, at first discreet, popularity of *Sinn Fein* songs, an occasional appearance of the tricolour in the streets of Dublin and other towns; a few trivial street disturbances—these were all the indices apparent. More there could not have been. The hand of Sir John Maxwell lay heavy upon the country. The rigours of Martial Law, gradually dwindling later into almost complete disuse, were at first stern and comprehensive. Assembly and procession were forbidden.

Certainly to the close of 1916 *Sinn Fein*, whatever else it might mean, meant no challenge to the security of the military position from the Government's point of view. "We shall certainly admit to the full," said Lord Lansdowne on behalf of the Government in the House of Lords on July 12th,

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“ the obligation which lies upon us to prevent a recurrence of these deplorable incidents, and we shall address ourselves to the task without shrinking from it . . . . Under the system which exists at the moment there ought not to be much fear of the situation in Ireland getting out of hand. We have Sir John Maxwell responsible, with some 40,000 troops to support him, and with the control of the Constabulary in his hands. We have unabated confidence in Sir John Maxwell, and shall give him all the support to which he is entitled. The powers which he is exercising, and which were conferred upon him by the Defence of the Realm Regulations, are powers which we are prepared to extend, if necessary, to meet any emergency which may arise . . . . The Prime Minister has already stated that he quite admitted that the present condition of the country requires the utmost vigilance on the part of the Imperial Government. For a time there was a rapid increase in the numbers of the *Sinn Fein* organisation, but that increase has dwindled of late. Although there have been disquieting symptoms they are less disquieting now, and the reports show that there has been some improvement in that respect. What is noteworthy is that there appears to be hardly any ordinary crime in the country. Lord Peel has suggested that our first duty is to govern Ireland, and to end if we could the mischief that has arisen during the past few years. We have taken some steps already with that object, and we certainly will not hesitate to take further steps if they are necessary for the purpose.”

The Nationalist Parliamentary Party's position after the abortive negotiations for a settlement was one of great delicacy, difficulty and complexity. On the one hand it was anxious to avoid any extreme policy which would alienate British



sympathy. On the other hand, with its position in the country seriously undermined by the aftermath of the Rebellion, it was impelled to adopt a strong policy more or less sympathetic with the *Sinn Féin* point of view, but with the uneasy knowledge that such a policy, in so far as it contributed towards giving greater freedom to the new movement, was more likely to strengthen the hands of *Sinn Féin* than to improve its own position in the country. In the House of Commons on July 31st, three days after Mr. Asquith had announced that the Government did not intend to proceed with the abortive "partition" scheme of settlement, Mr. John Dillon moved a resolution to the effect "that, in view of the announcement by the Government that they do not intend to introduce their long-promised Bill to settle the government of Ireland, it is vitally necessary and urgent that the Government should disclose to the House their plans for the future government of Ireland during the continuation of the war." In the course of his speech Mr. Dillon declared that "it was an absolute fact that Sir John Maxwell and the present system of Government acted as better organisers of disaffection than the organisers of the *Sinn Féin* movement." His speech was chiefly notable in that it contained the first hint of the "Peace Conference" policy afterwards adopted by *Sinn Féin*. Mr. Dillon asked:—"When the Government of this country and their Allies come to consider the settlement of the terms of peace on the principle of justice to all small and oppressed nationalities, how could the claim of Ireland be overlooked?"

In his reply to Mr. Dillon, Mr. Asquith submitted that, despite the failure of the negotiations, "a new situation in the history of the Irish question had been created, a situation which was a milestone on the road, and from which they could never go back to the old positions of irreconcilable

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hostility and recrimination." He then, declaring that "from their (the Government's) point of view the present was a transitional period, of probably short duration, and they did not think it desirable at such a time to make new experiments," announced the appointment of Mr. Duke as Chief Secretary and of Sir Robert Chalmers as Under-Secretary.\* "They could not leave Ireland without a civil Executive, and he trusted the arrangement he proposed would conduce to the permanent settlement which everybody in Ireland hoped and desired." Mr. John Redmond, after expressing his feeling that what had happened made a peaceful settlement in the end absolutely certain, defined the Nationalist Party's attitude. "After a few months of chaos in the Government of Ireland, the right hon. gentleman proposed as a remedy merely the setting up of Dublin Castle again, with the machinery which he himself had said had broken down. To do this was a very serious thing. His proposal for all practical purposes was to set up a Unionist Executive in Ireland. . . . He (Mr. Redmond) must, in the name of his colleagues, and in his own name, protest against any such proposal. This was clear—under this proposal the Government were taking on their own shoulders full and open responsibility. Nobody could say that the Nationalists had any responsibility in the matter. It left their hands clear. It was done in spite of their earnest protests, and made it their plain duty, once this Executive was set up, to watch and criticise and oppose the new administration how and when and where they pleased." In conclusion, Mr. Redmond affirmed that "in the course of this controversy he had not for one moment forgotten the war. Notwithstanding all that had happened, nothing would have the

\* Sir Robert Chalmers was later succeeded as Under-Secretary by Sir William Byrne.



effect of altering his view about the war and Ireland's duty towards the war. He had declared everywhere in Ireland that this was so." On the following day, at a meeting at the House of Commons, the Nationalist Party passed a resolution to the effect "that we strongly protest against the action of the Government in reviving the discredited system of Dublin Castle rule, already condemned on all sides, and condemned especially by the Hardinge Commission, and by the Prime Minister himself, and that in our opinion the appointment at this moment of a Unionist Executive to carry on this system is an outrage on the feelings of the Irish people."

During the Parliamentary Recess the chief subject of agitation in Ireland was that of conscription. On September 28th the *Freeman's Journal*, the official organ of the Nationalist Party, defined the conditions under which voluntary recruiting could receive another chance in Ireland. They were as follows:—“(1) Conscription must never be introduced in Ireland without Ireland's consent. (2) The abolition of Martial Law. (3) The dismissal of Sir John Maxwell. (4) The withdrawal of the Coalition System from Ireland. (5) No further 'harassing' of Irishmen temporarily resident in England. (6) Resumption of the work of preparing the Orders in Council for bringing the Home Rule Act into operation. (7) No imprisonment of Irishmen without trial. (8) The treatment of Irish Rebellion prisoners as political prisoners. (9) The Home Rule Act must provide for the 'ultimate integrity' of Ireland.” The *Freeman* said that the observance of these conditions by the British Government would revive voluntary recruiting in Ireland. On October 9th, in a speech at a municipal banquet in Dublin, the Lord Lieutenant estimated that the number of men of military service who were eligible and could be spared was, in round numbers, 150,000. He went

on to say that the Irish Divisions needed 40,000 men before Christmas, "and I venture to suggest that there is an immediate duty and obligation which rests upon Ireland with regard to her contribution, which is to keep up the fighting strength of the Divisions which have won such laurels and such fame." He added that "although I have contemplated, I have never advocated" compulsion in Ireland; that National Service in any community was not practicable without a measure of general assent; that there was no such measure of consent in Ireland at the present time, but that "I see no reason why anybody should despair of bringing home to the Irish democracy the overwhelming logic of the facts which confront us." Lord Derby subsequently announced in the House of Lords that from the date of the Rebellion to the middle of October eight thousand five hundred men had enlisted in Ireland, of whom three thousand five hundred were Ulstermen.

On October 6th Mr. Redmond, at the Town Hall, Waterford, made his first appearance at a political gathering in Ireland since the Rebellion. There was much speculation as to the nature of his reception and the tone of his speech. His arrival at the hall was preceded by a small disturbance by some *Sinn Feiners*, but his reception was cordial. The tone of his speech was markedly harsher than that of his earlier utterances in Parliament. He devoted much of it to the conscription question and announced that "on all else besides the war we must go into open and vigorous opposition." He said that the first fact they must look in the face was that a bad blow was struck at the hopes of Ireland by the rising in Dublin, engineered by men who were enemies of the constitutional movement for Home Rule. The real responsibility rested on the British Government, and it was idle to imagine that the relations between Ireland and the Government could continue as they had been before. Since



the war commenced the conduct of the Government towards this country was marked by the most colossal ineptitude, want of sympathy, and stupidity, so much so that their conduct would, he believed, have chilled the confidence of any people, much less a people like Ireland, whose history had taught them how dangerous it was to trust the English statesmen; and finally they suppressed the recent rising with gross and panicky violence, and they closed, he was sorry to say, their ears to the plea for clemency. Now they had reconstituted Dublin Castle. Ireland was living under a Tory Unionist Executive. Dublin Castle was once again a Unionist stronghold, and Martial Law was in existence in every part of the country. "And finally," continued Mr. Redmond, "let me remind you that every day the Unionist forces in Great Britain and Ireland are observing what is called by a singular irony the political truce by doing all they know, by taunts, incitements and threats of conscription, to revive once more the old racial distrust and passions of the two peoples. With such a Government with such a record the Irish Nationalist representatives can have no relations but those of vigorous opposition."

Having declared that Ireland's attitude so far as the war was concerned was unchanged, that the Nationalist Party would "do nothing calculated to postpone by a single instant the victorious end of this conflict," and that "I do think it would be a disgrace to Ireland if the Irishmen fighting at the front were left in the lurch, and if Ireland did not go to their assistance," Mr. Redmond proceeded to deal at length with conscription. He refused to believe that "malign though are the influences that are at work, the Government will be insane enough—there is no other phrase which would fit the intention—to challenge a conflict with Ireland on this matter. Conscription in Ireland,

so far from helping the Army and forwarding the interests of the war, would be the most fatal thing that could happen. It would be resisted in every village in Ireland. The attempted enforcement would be a scandal which would ring round the whole civilised world. It would produce no additional men; in fact, the mere threat of conscription has to a large extent paralysed voluntary recruiting." Mr. Redmond concluded:—"Now, I say this in all good faith to the Government and the military authorities: the way to continue to get recruits is far different. Appease the inflamed feelings of the Irish people, withdraw Martial Law, make it plain that the Defence of the Realm Act is to be administered in Ireland in the same spirit as it is in Great Britain, treat the prisoners of this unfortunate rising as political prisoners, put a stop to the insults and attacks upon Ireland, and recognise generously and chivalrously all she has done. On these lines the Government will succeed in recruiting even after all that has happened; but as for conscription, that way lies madness, ruin, and disaster."

The new policy defined by Mr. Redmond at Waterford was at once put into practice in Parliament, where the Nationalist Party gave notice of the following resolution, and asked for the earliest possible day for its discussion:—"That the system of government at present maintained in Ireland is inconsistent with the principles for which the Allies are fighting in Europe, and is, or has been, mainly responsible for the recent unhappy events, and for the present state of feeling in that country." The meeting also adopted a resolution "that the time has come when all the untried prisoners detained in connection with the Irish Insurrection should be released, and that all the Irish prisoners convicted of complicity in that Insurrection should, in accordance with the



modern practice of civilised States, be treated as political prisoners." The first resolution was moved by Mr. Redmond on October 25th; and Mr. Duke in his reply, declared that anyone who knew the conditions in the West of Ireland must be convinced of the necessity of putting some restraint on sympathisers with the late Rebellion. The obstacle to granting Home Rule, he proceeded, was that Irishmen themselves were not agreed upon it. The difficulty in ending Irish grievances lay in Ireland herself. As soon as it was safely possible, and not till then, restrictive measures would be removed.

An incident which occurred in Dublin about this time was generally associated with the Nationalist Party's new policy of "open and vigorous opposition" to the Government. An agitation had sprung up in the ranks of the Dublin Metropolitan Police for increased pay and other improvements in their position. On October 31st, in moving the money resolution for a Bill designed to remedy their grievances, Mr. Duke referred to "the conditions which had existed in Dublin during the last few days. Two matters," he said, "had come into great prominence. One was the holding of meetings of the police, convened by people outside, and directed by people outside, for the purpose of using the condition of the police as an instrument of pressure on the Government. Such meetings are held contrary to the regulations of the force." The second matter was the enrolment of a considerable body of the police in the Ancient Order of Hibernians—the sectarian and semi-secret "Friendly Society" organised by Mr. Devlin. The police oath forbade membership in any such society, with the exception of the Society of Freemasons. A week later the Chief Secretary, having investigated the situation more fully, said there had been breaches of discipline, but expressed

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himself as reluctant to believe that any large body of the police had, in fact, joined the Hibernians. The risk, he said, was that a body of men would run away from their discipline, and would have to be displaced. He did not fear that situation was going to arise, unless the Dublin Police were egged on and incited, and provoked to do something which he did not conceive they had ever entertained. Discipline must be maintained, but the road would be easy for every man who had not committed an offence which it was impossible not to punish to do his duty. Finally disciplinary action was taken against a few of the leaders of the movement in the police; at the same time the oath of service was deprived of its exemption in favour of the Freemasons. The Irish Unionist papers demanded urgently that Mr. Duke should also take action against the civilian agitators who had tampered in war time with the discipline of an armed force in the payment of the State; but nothing more was heard of this aspect of the trouble.

Apart from this incident nothing further of importance occurred until near the end of 1916. The fall of Mr. Asquith's Cabinet and the formation of Mr. Lloyd George's Government in December created great excitement in Ireland. The predominance of Unionist Ministers in the new Administration suggested to Nationalists sinister possibilities. Their apprehensions were expressed in a series of resolutions adopted by the Parliamentary Party on December 12th, of which the first declared that "while the policy of this Party in favour of the vigorous and successful prosecution of the war remains unchanged, we await the declaration of the Irish policy of the new Government before deciding on our future attitude towards it," the second that "so long as Ireland is denied Self-Government, and is held under



Martial Law and hundreds of Irishmen are in prison without trial, she must remain a source of weakness and danger, instead of being, as she admittedly would otherwise be, one of the most powerful sources of strength to the Empire in this crisis;" and the third renewed the "warning that any attempt to enforce conscription in Ireland would immediately produce disastrous and far-reaching results, and would, in our judgment, gravely interfere with the successful conduct of the war," and that the Party would accordingly resist "by every means in our power" any proposal involving the application of conscription to Ireland.

On December 19th, Mr. Lloyd George, in outlining the new Government's policy, made a brief reference to Ireland. He said that "while he had not yet been able to devote any time to the Irish problem, he would consider a settlement as a war measure of the first importance and a great victory for the Allied cause." He added that he "still felt that the solution of the Irish question was largely one of a better understanding," and concluded by saying that "we shall strive by all means, and at many hazards, to produce that atmosphere; but we ask men of all races and all creeds to help us, not to solve a political question, but to do something that would be a real contribution to the winning of the war." Mr. Redmond afterwards expressed his deep disappointment with the Prime Minister's "vague and indefinite" references to Ireland. He asked as a Christmas gift to the Irish people that the Rebellion prisoners should be released, and said that if the Government would take its courage in its hands and make a general jail delivery, it would be doing more to create a better atmosphere and a better feeling than anything else it could do. Mr. Redmond went on to say that if the Government intended to deal with

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the final reconciliation of Irish opinion by a settlement of the Irish question there were two or three things he would like to say. The first was that time was of the essence of the matter. The worst thing that could happen to the Irish question was that it should be allowed to drift further. His next point was that the Government should deal with the question boldly on its own responsibility and initiative. Mr. Redmond did not think anything was to be gained by contemplating further negotiations. Finally he declared that the Government must not mix up this question with conditions of recruiting or conscription, which must be left to a change of heart in Ireland. In conclusion he appealed to the Prime Minister "in Heaven's name let him not miss the tide."

On the following day, December 20th, Mr. Dillon renewed the Nationalist demand for the release of the interned Rebellion prisoners. It had already been widely rumoured in Ireland that the prisoners would be released before Christmas. Some disturbance had meanwhile occurred at the Frongoch Internment Camp, in North Wales, owing, as the Nationalists alleged, to an attempt to make some of the men turn informers, and disciplinary action had been taken by the camp authorities. Mr. Duke, in his reply to Mr. Dillon, explained that there were originally 3,000 arrests, and went on to deplore the shootings and imprisonments under sentences of Courts-Martial. The Chief Secretary proceeded to show that of those arrested who had not been dealt with by Courts-Martial, but merely interned without trial, only 560 remained interned after the sifting of the cases by an Advisory Committee. In the cases of these men, he said, whom the Committee were unable to advise the Government to release, the door was locked on the inside; they refused to give a required under-



taking not to engage in sedition during the continuance of the war. Mr. Duke defined his duty in Ireland, as he conceived it, as that of taking care that peace and order and a better atmosphere—without which a settlement in Ireland would be utterly impossible—should not be lightly disturbed by any means against which he could take precautions. After travelling the districts affected some two months before he concluded that the time had not come when these men could be indiscriminately turned loose on the countryside in the West of Ireland with any reasonable expectation that their presence there would be consistent with public safety. During the past two or three months he thought there had been a steady improvement and appeasement in Ireland; but a wholesale order of release, which would be irrevocable, could not be undertaken without making sure of the ground; “it could not be done in this airy way to improve the atmosphere, or to make a pledge of conciliation and peace to Ireland.” After this statement there was some surprise when the prisoners were almost immediately released. They reached Ireland in small parties, most of them on Christmas Eve, and there was little demonstration on their arrival. Among the released prisoners was Mr. Arthur Griffith, the original founder of the *Sinn Féin* philosophy. Their arrival was followed by an announcement by Mr. John Dillon in the *Freeman's Journal* that the Nationalist Party next proposed to demand investigation of the cases of those sentenced to penal servitude by the Courts-Martial, with a view to the revision or annulment of the sentences. Mr. Dillon expressed his hope that the Government “would take the bold and generous step of declaring a general amnesty.”

At the end of 1916, it may be said, the two conflicting tendencies which were to dominate Irish

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politics during the following year had begun to disclose themselves. On the one hand the release of the interned prisoners, in accordance with the Government's new policy of creating an "atmosphere" of appeasement, in fact laid the first foundations for the growth of a militant *Sinn Fein* policy, which was shortly to express itself as irreconcilably opposed to a constitutional settlement. On the other hand, the release of the prisoners was by a few days anticipated by the first suggestion of what, in contrast with the *Sinn Fein* policy, may be called the Convention policy. Shortly before Christmas there appeared inconspicuously in the Dublin newspapers, and with little more than perfunctory notice in their editorial columns, a circular issued by the "Irish Conference Committee." In the formation of this body, and the issue of its circular, which was addressed to the Chairmen of the County Councils and other public bodies in Ireland, the idea first took coherent shape of an attempt to solve the problem of Irish government by means of a Conference based on the precedent of those which secured the passage of the Wyndham Land Act, and the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland.\*

The circular issued by the Committee was signed by Mr. Dermot O'Brien, President of the Royal Hibernian Academy, and read as follows:—"Believing that all classes in Ireland are sincerely desirous of finding a solution of the problem of Irish government which will go as far as possible in reconciling divergent views, some gentlemen, whose names I give below, have met in Dublin with the object of considering whether a conference could, with advantage, be called into being. These gentlemen have elected me as Chairman, *pro tem.*,

\* The "Recess Committee," preceding the latter, was presided over by Sir Horace Plunkett.



and it is in this capacity that I am now addressing you at their desire. Before the recent rising most Irishmen, watching their country's heroism in the field, and marking the spirit of comradeship which was growing up between the men from Ulster and from the rest of Ireland, had almost come to believe that out of the supreme trials of many stricken fields there would emerge some clue to a political settlement after the war which all Irishmen would accept. Over these prospects the Rebellion and its consequences have thrown a cloud of disappointment. Yet, to many Irishmen, the cloud is not without its silver lining, and we believe there exists throughout Ireland a more widespread desire than ever before to find some means of settling our political differences. In our recent domestic history we have striking examples of the success which Irishmen in conference have achieved, not only in preparing the way for legislation, but in creating such an atmosphere of mutual helpfulness and good-will that difficulties, previously regarded as insoluble, have yielded to the treatment which has led to far-reaching and beneficial results. Indeed, these circumstances appear to us to impose on all leading Irishmen the obligation of coming together and considering in friendly conference what is the best and most generally acceptable means of solving the problem that lies before us. It is in this spirit that we ask your opinion as to the desirability of holding such a conference. It need hardly be said that there is no intention of going behind the recognised Parliamentary leaders. It is believed, on the contrary, that such a Conference, if brought together, could not fail to strengthen the hands of those leaders, and might bring about the settlement so universally desired."

The names appended to the circular were those of Lord Monteagle, Lord MacDonnell, Walter Kavanagh, Sir Algernon Coote, Sir Nugent

Everard, Sir Gabriel Stokes, Captain Fitzroy Hemphill, Diarmid Coffey, Major J. Crean, James G. Douglas, Joseph Johnston, F.T.C.D.; T. Kennedy, Edward E. Lysaght, J. Creed Meredith, George Russell ("Æ"), W. F. Trench, and H. E. White (Secretary). Several of its signatories were afterwards members of the Convention, or of its secretariat. Despite its cavalier treatment by the Irish Press the circular was, on the whole, well received by the public opinion to which it was addressed. For its generally favourable reception the patient and unobtrusive spadework in the interests of settlement which Mr. Duke had performed during his frequent visits to Ireland was probably in a considerable degree responsible. To that work the Irish Conference Committee lent a continuous assistance. The importance of its influence, beginning with the issue of its circular, in predisposing public opinion to the idea of settlement by consent which was later to fructify in the Convention can scarcely be over-estimated.

It was to be some months, however, before the Convention idea took formal shape. In the meantime the political history of Ireland is largely the history of the growth and development of the opposing *Sinn Fein* idea; which, by a reflex action, was finally to become the most powerful contributory cause among the influences making for the Convention policy. It soon became apparent after the release of the interned prisoners that what may be described as the sentiment, the emotion, of *Sinn Fein* was gradually being canalised in a policy. Mr. Arthur Griffith soon resumed the publication of *Nationality* in advocacy of the practical "Hungarian" plan of abstention from Parliament and passive resistance to Imperial authority in Ireland. *Sinn Fein* clubs began to appear up and down the country, and there was evidence of widespread propaganda and organisation work, on



political as distinct from the military lines on which the Irish Volunteers had proceeded before the Rebellion. The question of recruiting remained in the foreground of Irish affairs during this period. The Irish Unionist Party continued to urge conscription. In January, 1917, the Irish Canadian Rangers (Duchess of Connaught's Own) Battalion on its way from Canada to the front was brought to Ireland and toured the country in the interests of voluntary recruiting; it was everywhere received, if without great enthusiasm in some places, at least nowhere with overt hostility. The introduction of the (voluntary) National Service Bill, which applied to Ireland despite the protests of the Nationalist Party, was widely regarded as the "thin end of the wedge," and increased the tension in Ireland over the conscription question.

The first opportunity for *Sinn Fein* to show its strength came early in 1917. A vacancy occurred in the Parliamentary representation of North Roscommon, and Count Plunkett, father of one of the executed signatories of the Irish Republican Proclamation of Easter, 1916, was put forward as *Sinn Fein* candidate. His opponents were Mr. T. J. Devine, a well-known local man, who stood as the official Nationalist candidate, and was supported by the Parliamentary Party's organisations; and Mr. Jasper Tully, a local newspaper owner, who stood as an Independent Nationalist. The result of the poll was declared on February 5th. Count Plunkett headed it with 3,022 votes—a clear majority over both of his opponents, of whom Mr. Devine obtained 1,708 votes and Mr. Tully 687. The result of the election came as a great surprise to the public, but it was not generally accepted as a true test of the strength of *Sinn Fein* as an active force in Irish politics. The election presented some curious features. It was

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fought in deep snow, with drifts blocking the roads and preventing the canvassing and polling of many of the voters in the districts where the chief strength of the Parliamentary Party was supposed to lie. It was in this election that *Sinn Fein* tendencies among the younger Roman Catholic Priesthood first became apparent. The main driving force behind Count Plunkett was the Reverend Michael O'Flanagan, Curate of Crosna. Father O'Flanagan had first come into public notice at the great public funeral given to O'Donovan Rossa, the Fenian, in Dublin, where he delivered the Address. An eye-witness of the election wrote of Father O'Flanagan that "for twelve days and nights he was up and down the constituency, going like a whirlwind and talking in impassioned language to the people at every village and street-corner and cross-roads where he could get people to listen to him."

Father O'Flanagan was supported by men from Dublin, Cork and Limerick, released only a few weeks before from the internment camps in North Wales. The burden of all his election speeches was the same. He argued that conscription would have been applied to Ireland the year before but for the rising of Easter week. Count Plunkett's son had been shot as one of the leaders of the Rebellion, and two more of his sons were serving Courts-Martial sentences of penal servitude. By voting for Plunkett the men of North Roscommon would be warding off conscription from Ireland. In these circumstances it was argued that Count Plunkett won North Roscommon on the anti-conscription cry together with his personal appeal to popular sentiment, and that the election could not be regarded as a positive endorsement of *Sinn Fein* policy. This reading of the event, whatever its validity at the time, and subsequent events seemed largely to disprove it, was widely held immediately



after the election. Count Plunkett was given an enthusiastic reception on his return to Dublin after the declaration of the poll, and lost no time in making his position clear. In his speech he declared that Roscommon had struck a blow against the false theory of national liberty, of sending Irish representatives to a foreign Parliament. It would be necessary to carry on a systematic organisation from day to day until the whole of Ireland's representatives were pledged to remain in Ireland—until Ireland had a body of representatives who were the virtual Parliament of a free people. Count Plunkett, therefore, enjoyed the distinction of being the first chosen representative of the *Sinn Féin* creed of abstention and passive resistance, which for years before the Rebellion Mr. Arthur Griffith had preached in the wilderness.

The excitement of his election had scarcely died away when an event of a very different character raised it to fever pitch. North Roscommon, whatever else it did not prove, had at least seemed to show that *Sinn Féin* in its new development was "constitutional," and that the physical force idea had been discarded. At the end of February, however, a number of arrests were suddenly made in Dublin and throughout the provinces under Regulation 53 of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, which empowered the arrest of any person "whose behaviour is of such a nature as to give reasonable grounds for suspecting that he has acted, or is acting, or about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety or to the defence of the realm." The arrests were ordered by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief in Ireland, and the persons concerned—twenty-eight in all, some of them lately interned, others hitherto untouched, including some prominent Gaelic Leaguers—were prohibited from residing in Ire-

land and given free choice of their place of residence in England. The arrests were understood to be related to a renewed attempt to run arms on the West Coast of Ireland, and to effect a test mobilisation of the Irish Volunteers in connection with it. Challenged to justify them in the House of Commons by Mr. Dillon—who suggested that they were a sign of a change of policy in Ireland, and said that for the past year and a half the Government had been manufacturing *Sinn Feiners* by the ten thousand until it had maddened the country, and the Nationalist Party were between the devil and the deep sea—the Chief Secretary declared that the action of the Executive was taken with regret and was justified by absolute necessity; some of these men were “up to the ears in conspiracy.” Mr. Duke refused to state the facts within the knowledge of the Administration which made the arrests necessary. He went on to say that five-sixths of the men released from Frongoch had gone back to their business and were not engaged in any revolutionary action; but there was a minority—a considerable number—of men who from the day the Christmas holidays were over had devoted themselves to the endeavour to revive and set in motion the conspiracy which had such fatal results in Easter of last year. He finished by declaring that “in face of all the facts and in face of a ruthless, unscrupulous enemy, who thought he had gained a triumph in April, and who would countenance any sinister action, I as Chief Secretary came to the conclusion and decided that in this transaction, although there can be no charge, and although there can be no trial, it was essential for the public well-being that these men should not continue to reside in Ireland while things in Ireland are as they are.”

The arrests apparently precipitated open conflict between the Nationalist Party and the Govern-



ment. On March 7th Mr. T. P. O'Connor moved a resolution to the effect "that, with a view to strengthening the hands of the Allies in achieving the recognition of the equal rights of small nations and the principle of nationality against the opposite German principle of military domination and government without the consent of the governed, it is essential, without further delay, to confer on Ireland the free institutions long promised to her." Mr. Lloyd George, in his reply, said "that the dominant consideration in any present settlement must be its effect upon the conduct of the war. There must be no attempt at settlement which would provoke civil disturbance. The Government were prepared to confer Self-Government on those parts of Ireland which unmistakably demanded it; but they were not prepared to coerce the North-East portion of Ireland." He moved an amendment welcoming any settlement which would conduce to a better understanding between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, but declaring it impossible to impose by force on any part of Ireland a form of government which had not its consent. Mr. Redmond solemnly protested against the Prime Minister's statement. He asked whether the Ulster minority were to have power over the majority for ever. The Prime Minister's statement, he said, would play right into the hands of those who were trying to destroy the Constitutional Movement. He agreed that the condition of Ireland was very serious, that there were able men in Ireland with command of money who were bent on smashing the Constitutional Movement. "If the Constitutional Movement in Ireland disappears," declared Mr. Redmond, "the Prime Minister will find himself face to face with the Revolutionary Movement, and he will have to govern Ireland with the naked sword." Finally he called upon his colleagues to withdraw, and the

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Nationalist Party in a body thereupon marched out of the House.

Subsequently the Party drafted and issued a Manifesto to the United States and the Dominions. It declared that "the action of the British Government since the formation of the Coalition in May, 1915, culminating in the speech of the Prime Minister last night, has made the task of carrying on a Constitutional Movement in Ireland so difficult as to be almost impossible." It described Mr. Lloyd George's speech as taking up a position, which, if adhered to, would involve the denial of Self Government to Ireland for ever. It concluded in these words :—"To the men of Irish blood in the Dominions and the United States of America we appeal that they should bring pressure on the British Government to act towards Ireland in accordance with the principles for which they are fighting in Europe, and we specially appeal to the American people to urge upon the British Government the duty of applying the great principles so clearly and splendidly enunciated by President Wilson in his historical Address to the Senate of America."

The United States were at this time just entering the war, and the Nationalist Party's strongly worded appeal to Irish-Americans was calculated very gravely to embarrass the action of President Wilson. This was doubtless not the least cogent of the considerations which impelled the Government on March 22nd to announce, through the mouth of Mr. Bonar Law, that it had decided to make, on its own responsibility, another attempt at an Irish settlement. It was apparent that no definite policy to this end had yet been determined. Mr. Bonar Law said that if the attempt again failed the position would be worse than before. "But we have decided that, in spite of the risks, it is worth while for us, on our own responsibility, in



some way or other to make another attempt." He reminded the House of the difficulties, and pleaded "for a little time."

Almost simultaneously *Sinn Fein* had made a forward movement. Count Plunkett addressed a circular letter to the public bodies throughout Ireland inviting them to nominate delegates to attend a conference to be held in the Mansion House, Dublin, on April 19th. In this document he stated that he had been returned by North Roscommon to recognise no foreign authority in Ireland, to maintain the right of Ireland to independence, and to initiate Ireland's work of taking control of her own affairs. To bring that affirmation of the national faith and national will to a practical issue it was necessary to organise the whole country. Ireland should at once establish her own council. The first of its duties would be to address itself to the Peace Conference with a view to obtaining the support of the nations which would be represented there. This assembly would claim the recognition of the sovereign *status* of Ireland. The circular asked every public body to give its adhesion to the principles and methods of the movement indicated, and to appoint two delegates to take part in the conference. The reception of the letter could give no trustworthy indication of the support which the *Sinn Fein* policy enjoyed in the country, in view of the fact that, owing to the suspension of elections, the public bodies had largely ceased to be representative. In some places Count Plunkett's letter was burned; in many it was simply marked "read." Nevertheless a sufficient number of public bodies appointed delegates to invest the proceedings of the first *Sinn Fein* Convention with some authority.

It was held some ten days after the Easter Monday which marked the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Rebellion in Dublin. The

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anniversary was attended by a good deal of excitement in the capital and throughout the country. As a measure of precaution assembly and procession were forbidden in Dublin by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Bryan Mahon. On the morning of Easter Monday it was observed that some daring spirits during the night had scaled the ruins of the General Post Office in Sackville Street, the *Sinn Fein* headquarters during the rising, and run up half-mast on the flag-staff the Republican tricolour, which was also displayed from the buildings occupied during the rising. During the afternoon and evening some rioting occurred, though not of a serious character. In Cork and elsewhere demonstrations were attended by some disorder. On April 19th the *Sinn Fein* Convention met and between five and six hundred delegates assembled from elective bodies, labour organisations, and *Sinn Fein* clubs, including about a hundred priests. The Convention endorsed the following declarations:—“(1) That we proclaim Ireland to be a separate nation. (2) That we assert Ireland's right to freedom from all foreign control, denying the authority of any foreign Parliament to make laws for Ireland. (3) That we affirm the right of the Irish people to declare their will as law and enforce their decisions in their own land without let or hindrance from any other country. (4) That, maintaining the *status* of Ireland, we demand representation at the coming Peace Conference. (5) That it is the duty of the nations taking part in the Peace Conference to guarantee the liberty of the nations calling for their intervention and the releasing of the small nations from control of the greater Powers. (6) That our claim to complete independence is founded on human right and the law of nations. (7) That we declare that Ireland has never yielded to, but has always



fought against, foreign rule. (8) That we hereby bind ourselves to use every means in our power to attain complete liberty for our country." After these declarations steps were taken to effect a national organisation "to unite Irish advanced opinion and provide for action as a result of its conclusion." An Organising Committee was appointed of nine members, including Count and Countess Plunkett, Mr. Arthur Griffith, Father O'Flanagan, and Mr. William O'Brien, President of the Dublin Trades Council, and the Convention then adjourned to be called together again as occasion might require.

Ireland now awaited the disclosure of the Government's scheme of settlement. Even *Sinn Féin*, after the definition of its position at the Convention, contented itself with a waiting attitude. The Government's statement, despite energetic Nationalist pressure in Parliament, was repeatedly postponed. It was, in fact, not forthcoming until May 16th. Meanwhile rumours as to the Government's intentions began to circulate in Ireland. As the Government continued its soundings of the situation with the object of framing a policy, it was asserted with ever greater emphasis and particularity that its plan would ultimately take the form of the revival of the discredited "partition" scheme, this time in the shape of a system of county option, which would permit counties to vote themselves out of the operation of the Home Rule Act. These were the circumstances in which, early in May, a remarkable document appeared in the Irish Press addressed to the people of Ireland. It was signed by Cardinal Logue and Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, sixteen other Roman Catholic Bishops, and three Protestant Bishops—those of Tuam, Ossory and Killaloe. Such collaboration between the bishops of the two Churches was quite unprecedented in the political

history of Ireland. The Bishops' Manifesto declared that, while of sectional and individual protests against the dismemberment of Ireland there had been an immense volume, "there is still wanting the national muster-roll of adherents to the principle of an Ireland one and undivided." It proceeded:—"We appeal to the people without distinction, religious or political, and we ask all who are opposed to partition, temporary or permanent, to send their names. . . . Our requisition needs no urging. An appeal to the national conscience on the question of Ireland's dismemberment should meet with one answer and one answer alone. To Irishmen of every creed and class and party the very thought of our country partitioned and torn, as a new Poland, must be one of heart-rending sorrow. In asking these names we have no ulterior object in view, and we give an assurance that they shall be used only to show to the Government and to the world that the country is unrelentingly opposed to partition."

The next development was a letter from Archbishop Walsh which appeared in the Nationalist evening papers on May 8th. In it he said that the question might be asked why a number of Irish Bishops, Catholic and Protestant, had thought it worth while to sign a protest against the partition of Ireland. "Has not that miserable policy, condemned as it has been by the all but unanimous voice of Nationalist Ireland, been removed months ago from the sphere of practical politics? Nothing of the kind. Anyone who thinks that partition whether in its naked deformity or under the transparent mask of "County Option," does not hold a leading place in the practical politics of to-day is simply living in a fool's paradise." In a characteristic postscript the Archbishop added:—"I think it a duty to write this, although from information that has just reached me I am fairly satisfied that



the mischief has already been done, and that the country is practically sold."

This letter of the Archbishop's, with its engaging postscript, acquired a peculiar significance from the fact that it was published on the eve of the polling day in the South Longford election. It was everywhere recognised that this election was of greater importance than the earlier trial of strength between the Nationalist Party and *Sinn Féin* in North Roscommon. The contest was a straight fight between the two parties; the Nationalists were represented by Mr. Patrick McKenna, while the *Sinn Féiners* had selected as their candidate Mr. J. P. McGuinness, a local man who was serving a Court-Martial sentence of penal servitude in connection with the Rebellion. The Nationalist strength in the constituency was known to be great, and the *Sinn Féiners* freely declared that if they could carry South Longford they could carry any seat in Ireland. The Nationalist leaders, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin, intervened in person on behalf of Mr. McKenna, in whose support the whole force of the Nationalist organisation was concentrated in the constituency. The *Sinn Féiners* received unexpected aid at the last moment from the arrival of four of the men, including Mr. Darrell Figgis, who had been deported some weeks earlier, and had returned to Ireland secretly in defiance of the order prohibiting their presence in the country. Mr. Dillon admitted the gravity of the issue, which he declared was now clear, as it had not been in North Roscommon. "South Longford was faced with a clear political issue of the most far-reaching importance."

It was doubtful, however, whether the election could in fact be regarded as a clear issue between the Constitutional Movement and the *Sinn Féin* policy, which, indeed, at the time was still rather

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a mere assertion of a political principle than a coherent policy. The *Sinn Feiners* themselves, whose organisation in the constituency was singularly energetic and efficient, did not rely in any considerable degree upon appeals on the academic question of constitutionalism *versus* republicanism. They fought the contest rather on "live" issues of immediate practical politics. The imprisonment of their candidate was turned to account: "put McGuinness in to get him out," was the device emblazoned on their numerous motor cars. The conscription cry was used with as good effect as in North Roscommon. Finally, most effective use was made of Archbishop Walsh's letter with its declaration that the country was "practically sold" into partition, and copies of it were lavishly distributed at every polling booth. The result of the polling, declared on May 10th, showed that the *Sinn Fein* candidate had won by the narrow majority of thirty-seven votes. The result of the election was, admittedly by both sides, doubtful up to the very last moment. There could be no question that it was decided in Mr. McGuinness's favour by Archbishop Walsh's letter. Whatever other moral might be drawn from the election, therefore, it was an unmistakable endorsement of the Bishop's appeal to the country in their Manifesto to show itself "unrelentingly opposed to partition." The result of the election determined absolutely the reception which the Government's plan of settlement, published less than a week later, on May 16th, was bound to meet at the hands of the Nationalist Party.

It was contained in a circular letter addressed by Mr. Lloyd George to Mr. John Redmond, Sir John Lonsdale (Ulster Unionist Party), Mr. William O'Brien (All-for-Ireland Party), and Viscount Midleton (for the Unionists of the South and West). The Prime Minister wrote that



the Government approached the subject "with a deep desire to put an end to a state of affairs which is productive of immense evil, not only to Ireland, but to Great Britain and the Empire." He went on to say that any settlement proposed during the war must be one which would be substantially accepted by both sides, and that therefore "the idea of the Government has been to try to effect an immediate settlement conceding the largest possible measure of Home Rule which can be secured by agreement at this moment, without prejudice to the undertaking by Parliament of a further and final settlement of the questions most in dispute after the war." The Government's proposals to this end, which were at once found unacceptable, need not be recorded at length. Briefly, they contemplated the immediate application of the Home Rule Act to Ireland, excluding the six north-eastern counties of Ulster, this arrangement to be subject to reconsideration by Parliament at the end of five years; in the meantime the establishment of a Council of Ireland, composed of the members of Parliament of the excluded area and an equal delegation from the Irish Parliament, with powers to pass legislation affecting the whole of Ireland; and a reconsideration of the financial clauses of the Act.

After setting forth this scheme the Prime Minister, in resort as it were to an expedient almost of desperation, proposed the Convention plan. "There remains an alternative plan which, though it has been sometimes seriously discussed, has never been authoritatively proposed—that of assembling a Convention of Irishmen of all parties for the purpose of providing a scheme of Irish Self-Government. As you will remember, the Constitution of the Union of South Africa was passed, despite most formidable difficulties and obstacles, by a Convention representative of all

the interests and parties in the country, and the Government believes that a similar expedient might, in the last resort, be found effectual in Ireland. Would it be too much to hope that Irishmen of all creeds and parties might meet together in a Convention for the purpose of drafting a Constitution for their country which should secure a just balance of all the opposing interests, and finally compose the unhappy discords which have so long disturbed Ireland and impeded its harmonious development? The Government is ready, in default of the adoption of its proposals for Home Rule, to take the necessary steps for the assembling of such a Convention."

Mr. Redmond, in his reply, at once rejected the Government's scheme and welcomed the alternative proposal of a Convention. Observing that he could not accept the proposition that the Government was limited to proposing a settlement "which would be substantially accepted by both sides," he said that he and his Party had carefully considered the two alternative proposals contained in the Prime Minister's letter, and that "the first proposal would, in their opinion, find no support in Ireland, and they desire me to inform you they are irreconcilably opposed to this scheme, and that any measure based on it will meet with their vigorous opposition." The alternative of a Convention Mr. Redmond described as having "much to commend it." "We are prepared to recommend this proposal most earnestly to our countrymen, on condition that the basis on which the Convention is to be called is such as to secure that it will be fully and fairly representative of Irishmen of all creeds, interests, and parties, and, secondly, that the Convention be summoned without delay. If this proposal is put into operation I can assure you that no effort on the part of my colleagues and myself will be spared to realise the



high and blessed ideal pointed to in the concluding paragraph of your letter." Viscount Midleton, on behalf of the Southern Unionists, rejected the partition scheme and undertook to recommend the acceptance of the Convention plan on condition that it was fully representative and that its recommendations were subject to review by Parliament. The Irish Unionist Alliance subsequently ratified his acceptance. Mr. William O'Brien in his reply to Mr. Lloyd George, rejected the partition scheme and welcomed the proposal of a Convention as giving effect to "a principle we have so long contended for." Subsequently, however, he refused to agree to the constitution of the Convention, and the All-for-Ireland Party took no part in it.

Sir John Lonsdale, on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, after restating the Ulster Unionist case in his reply, said that his Party would recommend the Government's proposals for careful consideration to the Ulster Unionist Council. That body did not meet until June 8th, when it was addressed in private by Sir Edward Carson. It then passed a resolution to the effect that "being largely influenced by the representations which have been made to us by the Government that an agreement on the Irish question would materially help in the prosecution of the war to a victorious conclusion, and relying on the assurances of the Government, that every form of proposal will be open for consideration at the Irish Convention, that in the event of no agreement being come to no party will be bound or committed in any way by the proceedings of the Convention, and that no scheme will be forced upon the Ulster Unionists with which their representatives are not in agreement—(we) hereby accede to the Government's invitation that representatives should be sent to the Convention." A Committee of the Council

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was appointed which, besides advising on the selection of representatives and recommending names for the consideration of the Government as nominated members, was further empowered "from time to time during the holding of the Convention to take counsel with the representatives of the Ulster Party at the Convention." No such limitation upon the plenipotentiary powers of its representatives was imposed by any other party. All other representatives entered the Convention as free agents; the representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party alone were limited in their freedom of action in the Convention by the condition of having to refer to the Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council.

The attitude of *Sinn Fein* towards the Convention was semi-officially defined in the first instance by Count Plunkett. He declared that the Convention could not be a free and representative gathering, for, without a new register and a general election, neither the Nationalist Party nor the elected Councils had any claim to speak for the people. Even if a majority of the Convention demanded complete freedom, it would be put out of court, since no scheme would be officially recognised unless it kept Ireland "within the Empire," and maintained the supremacy of the English Parliament. The *Sinn Fein* Party would turn to the Peace Conference, and to their own resolves, for liberty. At a meeting of the Executive of the National Council of *Sinn Fein*, held on May 22nd, it was unanimously resolved that *Sinn Fein* should decline to participate "in any Convention called by the English Government in Ireland, ostensibly to settle the Irish question, unless (1) The terms of reference to such a Convention left it free to decree the complete independence of Ireland; (2) the English Government publicly pledged itself to the United States and the Powers



of Europe to ratify the decision of the majority of the Convention; (3) the Convention consists of none but persons freely elected by adult suffrage in Ireland; (4) prisoners of war treatment was accorded to the Irish prisoners at Lewes and Aylesbury." At this meeting Mr. Arthur Griffith, President of *Sinn Fein*, said that by its pledge to the Ulster Unionists not to force them to accept the decision of the majority of their countrymen the failure of the Convention was secured beforehand by the English Government, which would then be enabled to say to the United States and to the Powers of Europe that England had left the Irish question to the Irish themselves and that the Irish had failed to find a solution. This was England's plan to obstruct Ireland's appeal to the Peace Conference. The Dublin Trades' Council adopted the same attitude towards the Convention as *Sinn Fein*.

The Prime Minister, however, had awaited no party's formal definition of its attitude before proceeding with the summoning of the Convention. On May 21st he announced that the Government proposed "to summon immediately, on behalf of the Crown, a Convention of representative Irishmen, in Ireland, to submit to the British Government and to the British Parliament a Constitution for the future government of Ireland within the Empire." He went on to say that the Convention must be representative of all leading interests, classes, creeds and phases of thought in Ireland—not a Convention merely of political parties, though all these must necessarily be represented, including, he hoped, *Sinn Fein*. "In the main the view of the Government is that it ought to consist of representatives of the local governing bodies, the Churches, the trade unions, the commercial interests, the educated interests—in fact a real representation of Irish life, thought,

and activity in all the leading aspects." So far as possible the Government would invite delegates to be chosen by the bodies whom they represented. Recognising, however, that it would be desirable to have Irish interests represented which might not be chosen by any of these categories, the Government proposed to nominate members to secure that every element of Irish opinion was present. It was suggested that the Chairman should be nominated by the Crown, but this course was afterwards abandoned in favour of that of allowing the Convention to elect its own Chairman. Mr. Lloyd George next made it clear that no proposal on any side for the better government of Ireland could be shut out from discussion, and that no one, by the mere fact of going into the Convention, could be assumed to be pledged to the acceptance or rejection of any particular proposal or method for the government of Ireland. Finally, on behalf of the Government he gave a pledge that "if substantial agreement should be reached as to the character and scope of the Constitution framed by the Convention for the future government of Ireland within the Empire, we will accept the responsibility for taking all the necessary steps to enable the Imperial Parliament to give legislative effect to the proceedings of the Convention." He added a promise that, so far as the financial aspect was concerned, "should the Convention happily come to an agreement, we will not forget that restitution and reparation should begin at home."

While negotiations for the constitution of the Convention on the basis thus outlined by the Prime Minister were in progress an unhappy incident occurred in Dublin. A public meeting was called in Beresford Place on Sunday, June 10th, to demand the release of the Rebellion prisoners. The holding of this meeting was prohibited by a



Proclamation issued the previous day by Sir Bryan Mahon. Notwithstanding this prohibition a large crowd assembled when Count Plunkett and a companion arrived on a hackney car and attempted to address the audience outside Liberty Hall, sometime the Headquarters of the Citizen Army. The two men were placed under arrest by the police and conveyed to an adjoining police station. On their way the police were hustled by the crowd, and Inspector Mills, in command of the police force, was felled from behind by a hurley stick, and died during the night as a result of his injuries. The vicinity of the meeting remained disturbed for some hours. Subsequently Count Plunkett was removed from police control by the military, and placed in Arbour Hill barracks.

On the day after this affair Mr. Lloyd George announced that the constitution of the Convention had been settled. He explained that the total number of the Convention would be 101—an unwieldy number, he admitted, but it was impossible to have a small body in which all interests would be represented, as it was essential they should be, if an agreement was to secure the adhesion of the country. Fifteen members would be nominated by the Crown; thirty-three would be Chairmen of County Councils, and six Lord Mayors and Mayors of County Boroughs—these, in Mr. Lloyd George's words, to represent "the everyday life of the country." In addition the Chairmen of the Urban Councils were to be invited to select two members in each of the four provinces—eight in all. The Churches were to be represented by four of the Roman Catholic Bishops, the Primate and the Archbishop of Dublin for the Church of Ireland, and the Moderator of the General Assembly for the Presbyterian Church. As spokesmen of commerce the Chairmen of the Chambers of Com-

merce of Dublin, Belfast and Cork were to be invited, and as spokesmen of labour, representatives of the Trade Councils in Dublin and in Cork and of Trades Unions in Belfast—in all five representatives of labour. For the direct representation of organised political opinion the Nationalist Party, the Ulster Unionist Party, and the Irish Unionist Alliance, for the Unionists of Southern Ireland, were to appoint five members each, and Mr. O'Brien's party and the Irish Representative Peers two each. Five seats were also reserved for *Sinn Fein*. In accordance with the resolutions passed by the National Executive, *Sinn Fein* refused the invitation to appoint delegates. The same course was followed by Mr. O'Brien's All-for-Ireland League, and the Kerry County Council also declined to permit its Chairman to attend. These abstentions reduced the complement of the Convention to ninety-three. Two more labour representatives were added to the original five, so that the Convention, as finally constituted, numbered ninety-five members.

In announcing the constitution of the Convention the Prime Minister referred to the death of Major William Redmond, who a few days before had been killed in action at Messines. "We all remember," Mr. Lloyd George said, "his last appeal to us, and I think that, now that this Convention is being launched on its career, I cannot do better than read his words:—'While English and Irish soldiers are dying side by side must the eternal conflict between the two nations go on? In the name of God, we here, who are, perhaps, about to die, ask you to do that which largely induced us to leave our homes; that which our fathers and mothers taught us to long for; that which is all we desire, to make our country happy and contented and enable us when we meet Canadians, Australians, or New Zealanders side by side, to



say—Our country, just as your country, is self-governing within the Empire.’” The Prime Minister added:—“He was carried tenderly and reverently from the battlefield by Ulster soldiers in an Ulster ambulance. The solemn appeal which I have read comes to us anew from an honoured grave on the frontier of the land he gave his life to liberate.”

The death of Major Redmond, however, was to do something else besides provide an inspiration for the work of the Convention. It was to provide the occasion for the event which, even while the Convention was assembling, was at once to disclose the full strength of *Sinn Féin* in the country and confirm its hold on the popular imagination—the East Clare election. On June 17th, rather more than a month before the first meeting of the Convention, all the Rebellion prisoners serving Court-Martial sentences had been unconditionally released. Their release was announced by Mr. Bonar Law in the House of Commons two days earlier. He said that it was “beyond measure desirable that the Convention shall meet in an atmosphere of harmony and good-will in which all parties can unreservedly join. Nothing could be more regrettable than that the work of the Convention should be prejudiced at the outset by embittered associations.” The Government in deciding to release the prisoners in order to remove one of the most serious causes of misunderstanding, had satisfied itself “in the first place that the public security will not be endangered by such an act of grace; and secondly, that in none of the cases concerned is there evidence that participation in the Rebellion was accompanied by individual acts which could render such a display of clemency impossible.” He concluded by saying that the grant of a general amnesty was inspired by the sanguine hope that it “will be welcomed in a spirit

of magnanimity, and that the Convention will enter upon its arduous undertaking in circumstances that will constitute a good augury for that reconciliation which is the desire of all parties in all parts of the United Kingdom and the Empire."

The released prisoners arrived in Dublin on June 20th, having been brought to Pentonville Prison from Parkhurst, Maidstone, Portland and Lewes, and sent off to Ireland by special train, leaving Euston on the previous Sunday evening. Madame Markievicz was not released from Aylesbury prison until Monday evening. They were met on arrival by an enormous crowd and driven through the streets in procession. Throughout the day there was a considerable display of Republican colours in the streets, and there were some disturbances in the town at night, which were renewed three days later when Madame Markievicz arrived and was driven in procession to Liberty Hall. In Dublin, however, though there was much excitement, no serious disorder occurred. In Cork, on the other hand, the return of the prisoners was followed by rioting which the Press described as "the worst seen in Cork for forty years." Much damage was done to property. Order was not restored until the military were called out, and machine guns mounted in the streets. In the course of the earlier disturbances, when the police made numerous baton charges and revolver shots were freely exchanged, one man was killed and several injured. Everywhere throughout the country as the released men reached their homes they were received with tremendous enthusiasm. Many of them left home again almost immediately to support Mr. de Valera, who had emerged almost immediately as the most prominent of the released prisoners, and had been selected as the *Sinn Fein* candidate for the vacant seat in East Clare.



During the early part of July public attention was divided between this election and the selection by the various bodies of delegates to the Convention. We deal with the East Clare election in our next chapter. The Convention held its first meeting on July 25th under the shadow of Mr. de Valera's overwhelming victory. The first meeting was preceded by a picturesque incident—a Service for delegates in St. Andrew's Church, Suffolk Street, Dublin, which was in former days very closely connected with the Irish House of Commons, whose members assembled there for worship on all great occasions. The Convention met in the Regent House, Trinity College, a commodious block of buildings placed at its disposal by the Provost, and made what was generally regarded as an auspicious beginning by unanimously electing Sir Horace Plunkett as its Chairman.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SINN FEIN POLICY.

It is probable that of the four *Sinn Fein* electoral victories in 1917, that at Longford was the most important. The division had always been regarded as one of the safest of the Party seats (unlike Roscommon, Kilkenny and Clare, which had all certain neo-Fenian traditions), and *Sinn Fein* itself hardly hoped for success. An English newspaper, *The Manchester Guardian*, described the return of Mr. McGuinness as the equivalent of a serious British defeat in the field; and the event undoubtedly played a part in inducing the Government to that reconsideration of its *non-possumus* attitude of March in regard to Irish settlement, which finally produced the Convention. But in picturesque character the contest in East Clare outdid others. The circumstances of the case made attention emphatic, for the vacancy had occurred through the death of Mr. John Redmond's brother, Major Redmond, a victim of the war whose gallantry was in the mouths of all, and *Sinn Fein* proposed to fill the vacancy with a man who had been sentenced to execution for a cause seemingly opposite to that for which Major Redmond had died. Mr. de Valera went straight from prison to Clare, where his personality evoked immense curiosity. He was a man of about 35, who had worked for many years in the Gaelic League, and was by profession a school-master. There were unfounded rumours, suggested perhaps by the foreign name, that Mr. de Valera had a past of extraordinary revolutionary adventure in foreign lands. In fact, though born in New York, his childhood and youth had passed quietly in Ire-

land. He had a Spanish-American father, but his mother's family was Irish and resided in Co. Limerick. Good reports were spread concerning his leadership and conduct during the rising as rebel Commandant at Boland's Mills in Dublin, and these emanated not only from his followers but also from friends who were his political opponents.

Clare took to Mr. de Valera at once, and the *Sinn Fein* progress was a triumphal one. The name itself of the hero seemed to delight the lips of all, especially those of children. Yet Mr. de Valera was little of an orator, and when he spoke he seemed rather to be arguing with himself aloud than trying to convince an audience. His supporters at the election relied largely upon a destructive criticism of the Irish Party's recent policy. Many priests in the constituency, including the Bishop, had turned anti-Redmondite on the Ulster question, but the chief question at issue was whether "the Crown Prosecutor"—Mr. de Valera's opponent, Mr. Lynch, had held the position of a Crown Prosecutor—should be preferred to a comrade of "the men who had died for Ireland." The Party itself put little energy into the combat, and Mr. Lynch, while expressing himself as a follower of Mr. Redmond stood "unofficially." The result was quickly seen to be a foregone conclusion; but the figure of 3,000, which was Mr. de Valera's majority, caused consternation amongst the Parliamentarians.

Mr. Lennox Robinson, the Irish critic and playwright, has very pleasantly described the final scenes in Ennis, that "town of streams and graceful bridges." "The gate opens at last and we are swept through it. But there is no rowdyism, no disorder. The *Sinn Fein* Volunteers take entire possession of the situation; they organise the crowd; they form ranks in front of the Courthouse



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steps; the discipline is perfect; we mere outsiders are pushed back, we are like civilians at a military review. A line of bored police at the foot of the steps faces the Volunteers; a D.I. strangely aloof from the situation stands at the foot of a granite pillar. . . . There is no longer any doubt about it, de Valera is in, the Volunteers cheer again and again, and the man capers. We breathe a sigh of relief when he is pushed aside and the hero of the day, in Volunteer uniform, comes forward. Young, dark, eager, vivid, the very counterpart of these young men around us. If personality counts for anything, if like be attracted by like, we understand why he has won. . . .”

“‘Going and going!’ What will you bid? The Unionist bids one thing, the Nationalist another, William Redmond throws his life into the scale, de Valera boldly bids an ‘Irish Republic.’ This last extravagant bid is rather like that of a man who, with a balance at his bank of a hundred pounds, offers you a cheque for a million; but five thousand Claremen have accepted his promise as good, and the bidding has been pushed up. ‘Going, going.’ What will you bid? What will the Convention bid? It must bid high and boldly.”

Just after his victory in Clare, Mr. de Valera devoted much of his time to the constituency. He had apparently established a remarkable personal ascendancy over the young men in this county, and during the early autumn he addressed many large meetings and parades of his Volunteers. His speeches, as reported in the newspapers, suggested that a “second Easter Week” might be in contemplation. It is true that the *Sinn Fein* leader had often to correct these reports, and that the more fiery passages, when carefully read in their proper context, usually contained important reservations. Journalists were, at all events, attracted to the County Clare, and a *Daily Mail* “special

representative" "wrote up" the progress of the *Sinn Fein* leader, and described, in a tone at once jocose and wondering, "the splendid manhood" at his command, and the "colleens" who laid gifts at his feet. Suddenly the Government seemed to regret that it had released the prisoners from penal servitude, and a period of scares ensued. Stringent orders had been issued on the eve of the Convention's meeting against drilling and the carrying of arms. When these were disobeyed arrests were promptly made. Large numbers of the men of Easter Week found themselves again in jail, under sentences varying from two months to three years. Mr. de Valera himself remained unmolested. The Parliamentary representative of Kilkenny City, a popular member of the Irish Party, died, and this urban constituency promptly endorsed the *Sinn Fein* programme by returning Mr. Cosgrave, one of Mr. de Valera's colleagues, at the head of the poll.

The tension had grown very acute. One of the most prominent of British publicists, Mr. Austin Harrison, arrived in Ireland and insisted in urgent articles and letters that no treaty of peace between Great Britain and Ireland would be worth the paper it was written on unless signed by *Sinn Fein*. But Mr. Harrison failed to impress either the Government or *Sinn Fein*. He wanted the latter to associate itself with a so-called "International *Magna Charta*," which was a proposed demonstration in favour of peace on the lines of democracy and the self-determination of nationalities. In return, Mr. Harrison suggested, the *Sinn Fein* claim would receive favourable consideration from the progressive forces of the allied countries. The leaders of *Sinn Fein* scented some deep-laid conspiracy on the part of Mr. Harrison, and withdrew from the negotiations; Mr. John MacNeill, however, expressed an inter-

esting personal opinion on Ireland's position in regard to internationalism, and on the general issues which had been raised, in the *English Review*, Mr. Austin Harrison's magazine. "Several of the belligerent powers," he said, "have themselves questioned the right of sovereignty. Great Britain and France have echoed the declarations of America and Russia. The doctrine of the rights of nations has been set up against the doctrine of absolute sovereignty." Mr. McNeill for his part accepted the former doctrine, the application of which would lead in the case of Ireland to a situation of *interdependence*. Ireland claimed," he said, "national liberty not less than that of any other nation," but no country would have a greater interest in the world's peace, and in a reorganised Europe there would be no danger to England of her entering into entangling alliances or engagements. The English military and naval objection to the separation of Ireland presumed the doctrine of absolute sovereignty as opposed to the doctrine of national rights and was therefore not in keeping with Allied professions. As regards the economic side of the question, Mr. MacNeill conceded that in any circumstances the most intimate commercial relations would continue to exist between the two countries, and in this way dissociated himself from the doctrine of economic nationalism preached by Mr. Arthur Griffith and the orthodox *Sinn Feiners*. In the same number of the *English Review* the Editor described the situation thus:—"The Government Castle rule is now recognised by all as doomed, yet still this government exists and still it has to govern; and against it there stands ranged *Sinn Fein*, which the Government regards as a revolutionary party, and so without *status*. Between these there is Nationalism, which probably at the polls would not return ten members. . . .



The danger lies in the anomaly that *Sinn Fein* is not recognised as a party."

The philosophical "conversations" between the *Sinn Fein* leaders and the English Editor did not relieve the tension. The prisoners in Mountjoy jail went on hunger strike, were forcibly fed, and on September 30th one of them, Thomas Ashe, died. Ashe, a native of Dingle, Co. Kerry, who was a schoolmaster in County Dublin, had been a very popular member of the Gaelic League, and during the Rebellion had led the Volunteers in a victorious and bloody affray with the police at Ashbourne in County Meath. After his return from an English prison he soon found himself in an Irish prison convicted on the charge of seditious speech. Ashe died in hospital a few hours after being removed in an exhausted condition from Mountjoy Prison. Preparations were at once made for the organisation of a funeral, which should be the occasion of such a procession through the streets of Dublin as had not been witnessed since the death of Parnell. The funeral was, in truth, an impressive spectacle. Thousands upon thousands of Irishmen and women, country and townfolk, lined the "ancient way" to Glasnevin. Nothing could have been more orderly than their conduct, and the contrast with the public funerals of Irishmen in former times (which ended always with jovial night scenes) was the subject of much comment. Had Ireland become militarised, disciplined, docile? The dominant feature of the day was the reappearance of the Volunteers in uniform and marching order—a breach of the military regulations of which no account was taken.

A month was occupied with the inquest on Ashe. During the proceedings the jury proposed that the Chief Secretary might have useful evidence to impart. But Mr. Duke did not put in

an appearance at the Coroner's court. The Prisons Board pleaded privilege. Mr. Healy, M.P., who appeared for Ashe's relatives, seemed uncertain as to whether the English Government or the Prisons Board, or the doctor who had administered the forcible feeding should be the object of his attack. At the head of the Prisons Board, as it happened, was Mr. Max Green, who was the son-in-law of Mr. Redmond himself. Finally the jury, which was by no means *Sinn Fein* in its composition, delivered its verdict as follows:—"We find that the deceased, Thomas Ashe, according to the medical evidence of Professor McWeeney, Sir Arthur Chance, and Sir Thomas Myles, died from heart failure and congestion of the lungs on September 25, and that his death was caused by the punishment of taking away from his cell his bed, bedding, and boots, and being left to lie on the cold floor for fifty hours, and then being subjected to forcible feeding in his weak condition, after a hunger strike of five or six days. We censure the Castle authorities for not having acted promptly, especially when the grave condition of the deceased and other prisoners was brought under their notice on the previous Saturday by the Lord Mayor and Sir John Irwin; and find that the hunger strike was adopted against the inhuman punishment inflicted, and as a protest against their being treated as criminals after they demanded to be treated as political prisoners in the first division. We condemn forcible or mechanical feeding as an inhuman and dangerous operation, and say that it should be discontinued. We find that the assistant doctor that was called in, having had no previous practice in such operations, administered forcible feeding unskilfully; and that the taking away of the deceased's bed, bedding and boots was an unfeeling and barbarous act. And we censure the Deputy-Governor for

violating the prison rules, and inflicting punishment which he had no power to do. We infer that he was acting under instructions from the Prisons Board at the Castle, which refused to give evidence and documents asked for. We tender our sympathy to the relatives of the deceased in this sad and tragic occurrence."

Concessions were made by the Irish Government in regard to the treatment of imprisoned *Sinn Feiners* (who had demanded the *status* of political prisoners); and if these concessions did not altogether satisfy the national sentiment, they at least made it likely that another tragedy like that of Ashe would be avoided. Dublin Castle made it clear that while drilling would not be tolerated, a considerable latitude would be allowed to the expression of *Sinn Fein* opinion. The crisis, however, lingered on, and numbers of arrests of the smaller fry of the movement continued to be made. In the month of October Nationalists were made very indignant by the action of the police, acting under military instructions, in making extensive raids for the arms belonging to the old Redmondite or "constitutional" Volunteers. It was charged to the partiality of the Government that the arsenals of the Northern Unionists were left uninvaded. Mr. Duke defended himself as follows:—Colonel Moore, who before the split among the Nationalist Volunteers had been one of the principal officers and leaders of the movement, now proposed to reorganise the force. But Colonel Moore, although not a *Sinn Feiner*, no longer saw eye to eye with Mr. Redmond on political matters, and the force, if reorganised as proposed, would have been emancipated from the control of the Irish Parliamentary Party. There was the possibility of a *rapprochement* with the *Sinn Fein* Volunteers. The Irish Command enquired of Colonel Moore whether he could give a



guarantee that the possessions of his Volunteers would not fall into undesirable hands. Colonel Moore was unable to do this, and therefore in the interests of public safety orders were given for the disarmament of his men.

This statement was made in a debate in Parliament on October 23rd, on a motion by Mr. Redmond, deploring the policy of the Irish Executive. He described the situation in Ireland as one of extreme gravity, and referred to the seizure of arms, and the arrest and treatment of *Sinn Fein* prisoners, and the death of Thomas Ashe as instances of an irritating policy. The Chief Secretary, in his reply, agreed with Mr. Redmond that "this is a time in Ireland of grave crisis and peril, but it is also a time of unprecedented and unequalled opportunity." He proceeded to defend the policy of the Executive on the ground that "the young men of Ireland—200,000 of them—are being enrolled for the purpose of creating a new Rebellion in Ireland. . . . Week by week, extending over a period of several months, there has been steadily growing, in every parish in Ireland, a new organisation of Irish Volunteers." Referring to the deportations in February, he said that the deportation of "a certain number of people who had been engaged, and are now engaged, in this conspiracy," was ordered because "the helping hand of Germany was being held out again, and His Majesty's Government knew it well." Mr. Duke went on to declare that "half of the trouble in Ireland during recent weeks has arisen because the Convention is doing well. The design of the leaders of the *Sinn Fein* movement requires the failure of the Convention." To an interrogation asking why Mr. de Valera was at large, the Chief Secretary replied that for mere political controversy, however extreme, while a new Constitution for Ireland was in the making, there should be no

arrest which could be avoided. Nothing could be more helpful to the propaganda of secession. He concluded by saying that there had been, and there would be, no arrests except of people who directly incited to violence, or for the deliberate infringement of public safety. Later Mr. Lloyd George intervened in the debate. Mr. de Valera's speeches, he said, were "calm, deliberate and almost cold-blooded incitements to rebellion." The Government could not possibly forget what had previously happened when speeches of the same sort were delivered, and there was the same kind of drilling, and the same sort of information about intrigues to get German rifles into Ireland. It was essential that the Government should take action—not provocative action but firm action. The Prime Minister added that there were three things which the Government must make quite clear in the interests of the Convention and of Ireland. First of all, the incitements to rebellion could not be tolerated, and the language of Mr. de Valera was language that could have no other meaning. Anything that was part and parcel of an organisation for rebellion must be stopped. In the next place, as to the *Sinn Fein* demand for sovereign independence, "the Government could not accept anything of that sort." Finally the Prime Minister repeated in specific terms the Government's undertaking to give legislative effect to any finding of the Convention which commanded "substantial agreement."

The death of Ashe had exalted and extended the sentiment of *Sinn Fein*. Nevertheless, as the Convention continued to do its work, the hope of a constitutional and peaceful settlement began to grow very strong throughout the country. The militarism attributed to Mr. de Valera received a set back, even in communities which remained wholly *Sinn Fein* in sentiment. A clerical party which was by no means dependent on Mr. Red-

mond but yet disliked greatly the doctrine of physical force began to establish its influence. Dr. O'Dwyer, the *Sinn Fein* Bishop of Limerick, Sir John Maxwell's antagonist, was dead, and his mantle of patriot had fallen to some extent upon Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of the neighbouring See of Killaloe. Dr. Fogarty had voted for Mr. de Valera at the East Clare Election, and had written a very popular comment on the Ashe case. But Dr. Walsh, the Archbishop of Dublin, whose intervention in the Longford contest had proved of inestimable benefit to *Sinn Fein*, was now silent. Such dignitaries of the Church as spoke uttered what were described as "solemn notes of warning." They besought their countrymen not to forsake the paths of constitutional agitation, and quoted Papal *dicta* in regard to the need of obedience to lawful authority. These pronouncements were directed evidently against the Volunteers rather than against the *Sinn Fein* movement proper. The Volunteer and *Sinn Fein* organisations had been formally recognised as separate from each other at the *Sinn Fein* Convention of October 25th, the details of which are given below. Mr. de Valera and other leaders replied to the Bishops; denied that another rising was in contemplation; but demurred to the description of British Government as a lawful authority. Towards the end of November Cardinal Logue issued a long statement on the war, on Ireland and the Convention. He expressed his regret that Europe had refused to be guided to the conclusion of a Christian peace by the admonitions of the Vatican. Ireland surely, he continued, would not add to the general misery of the world by any rash, foolish or un-Christian action of her own. Any pacifist might have subscribed to the Cardinal's statement, which, nevertheless, contained several direct reproaches of *Sinn Fein*. Cardinal Logue characterised the Re-



public propaganda as an insane one, and asserted that the whole hope of Ireland depended on a successful outcome of the Convention.

It appears that during the month of October very considerable pressure was exercised upon the military and civil authorities of Dublin Castle, with the object of inducing the arrest of Mr. de Valera and the complete suppression of *Sinn Fein*. We have already mentioned the Irish debate in the House of Commons in which the Premier had quoted some strong passages from Mr. de Valera's speeches, and had indicated that at any moment the Government might cease to tolerate Republican propaganda. He had replied with the word "never" to the *Sinn Fein* demand for the complete "self-determination" of Ireland, and declared that in no circumstances would Great Britain grant to Ireland the right of secession. The interests and influences represented by the militarist *Morning Post* asserted that the natural corollary of such declarations was the application of force. Conscription offered the remedy; for conciliation and compromise had been tried and found wanting—as the *Sinn Fein* attitude towards the Convention showed. Towards the end of the first week in November the Nationalist Press of Dublin and the provinces began to display signs of extraordinary alarm. It was widely reported on the one hand that another rising was contemplated, and on the other hand that the Government had decided to arrest Mr. de Valera. It had been announced that there would be a parade of Volunteers through Dublin on the following Sunday, November 4th, and that a *Sinn Fein* meeting, to be held at Newbridge, near the Curragh, had been proclaimed by the military authorities. The *Independent* newspapers published alarming appeals to *Sinn Fein* to desist from any action that might lead to bloodshed, and there were wide-

spread and extravagant rumours as to the immense military preparations and precautions that had been taken. The rumours, in fact, coincided with extensive troop movements which, as it proved afterwards, had no connection with the state of Ireland. In face of the police preparations the proclaimed meeting was abandoned. In many parts of the country, including the outskirts of Dublin, contingents of the Irish Volunteers held uniformed parades and route marches, but nothing happened in the end; the dreaded Sunday passed off quite quietly. The scare was, however, the subject of newspaper comment for many weeks, during which the *Freeman's Journal* discoursed on the attempts of a "hidden hand" to provoke trouble in Ireland with the object of hampering the work of the Convention.

A speech by Lord Wimborne, the Viceroy, in the House of Lords some days later lent colour to this view of the situation. Lord Wimborne said that the Government had been circumstantially informed that there would be a rising, "but the Chief Secretary, with my full concurrence, refused to take advice tendered as to what his duty was. Far from there being a rising, or even an armed demonstration, or indeed any demonstration at all, not a dog barked." He added that had preventive action been taken it would inevitably, "as perhaps was intended," have killed the Convention. In the same speech the Lord Lieutenant said that the Government possessed an adequate military establishment for the enforcement of law and order, that the drilling in the south and west had at present no military significance, and that in these circumstances "the policy of the Irish Government must be not to seek trouble, but if trouble came to be ready to meet it." The governing factor in the Irish situation was the Convention. The Irish Government had a

double duty to perform: its duty to Ireland was to pursue the policy of appeasement and reconciliation; its duty to the Empire to protect it from untoward and hampering perils in the prosecution of its task. Both these duties, Lord Wimborne declared, were being faithfully performed.

Let us now retrace our steps a little and allow *Sinn Fein* to speak for itself, officially, as it did at the *Sinn Fein* Convention which assembled in the Dublin Mansion House on October 25th, and concluded its proceedings on the following day. These proceedings threw some new light on its quality and strength. Observers were much impressed by their dignity, order, and self-discipline, and by the general freedom of the movement from the meaner political vices and those personal jealousies and suspicions which have commonly infected Irish politics. A report read by Dr. T. Dillon, one of the secretaries, showed the progress made by the *Sinn Fein* organisation during the past year. It stated that the past eight months had been a period of unprecedented growth and activity in regard to the movement for the achievement of Irish independence. The tremendous victories of East Clare and Kilkenny were the first fruits of the amalgamation of all the national political organisations. There were at present affiliated to the organisation close on twelve hundred clubs, representing a membership of a quarter of a million. The Convention consisted of seventeen hundred delegates, representing rather more than a thousand clubs.

Mr. Arthur Griffith, in his Presidential Address, said that the fundamental position for which *Sinn Fein* strove had been gained: Ireland had renounced the British Parliament, and with that renunciation she had destroyed the moral sanction of British authority in the country. He proceeded to deny in emphatic



terms the allegation of "German gold." The money received and spent by *Sinn Fein* was set out in their balance sheet, and every penny of it was subscribed by the Irish people. The balance sheet, adopted earlier in the proceedings, had shown that the subscriptions and other receipts up to September 30th amounted to £4,566, with an expenditure, chiefly on organisation and election expenses, of £3,315, leaving a balance in hand of £1,251. If their opponents were surprised at the resources of *Sinn Fein*, said Mr. Griffith, he replied to them that for almost all the work of the movement the workers gave their services and their energies voluntarily and without pecuniary reward. After recalling the circumstances in which *Sinn Fein* had refused the offer of representation on the Irish Convention, the President went on to say that Ireland's case at the Peace Conference could only be heard under two conditions. The first was the destruction of the Irish representation in the English Parliament, for if that representation were to remain it would be taken as a repudiation of Ireland's demand for sovereign independence. In default of a general election, however, they must have a Constituent Assembly chosen by the whole people, which would speak with authority for the people. They must see that every constituency selected its representatives to meet afterwards in Dublin in an assembly which would speak for Ireland at the Peace Conference. When that assembly sat they would have taken a longer step towards Irish independence than had been taken for the last hundred and twenty years. Finally Mr. Griffith spoke of the danger of a split in the movement. All differences on minor points must be subordinated to the great issue, to carry out to the fullest degree the object for which men had died in every generation—the complete independence of Ireland.

Mr. Cathal Burgess, seconded by Mr. Sean Milroy, then proposed the adoption of the Constitution. This Constitution, embodied in a lengthy document, contained as its essential clauses the following:—" *Sinn Fein* aims at securing the international recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish Republic. Having achieved that *status* the Irish people may, by referendum, freely choose their own form of government. This object shall be attained through the *Sinn Fein* organisation, which shall, in the name of the sovereign Irish people:—(a) deny the right, and oppose the will, of the British Parliament or British Crown, or any other foreign Government, to legislate for Ireland; (b) make use of any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection by military force or otherwise. And whereas no law made without the authority and consent of the Irish people is ever, or can be, binding on the Irish people, therefore, in accordance with the resolution of *Sinn Fein*, adopted in Convention, 1905, a Constituent Assembly shall be convoked, comprising persons chosen by the Irish constituencies, as the supreme national authority to speak and act in the name of the Irish people, and to devise and formulate measures for the welfare of the whole people of Ireland." The clauses of the Constitution were carefully scrutinised by the Convention, but it was finally adopted with no substantial modification. The most notable incident in this part of the proceedings was the moving of an *addendum* to the Constitution insisting on the right of Irishmen to drill and arm for the defence of Ireland, and declaring that men of military age should be educated in the use of arms. After the President had suggested the advisability of entangling the political organisation of *Sinn Fein* with the military organisation of the Volunteers, and



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Father O'Flanagan had declared that for *Sinn Fein* to attempt to enforce conscription as their method of defending Ireland would lead them to disaster, it was decided to adopt the proposal as an expression of opinion, but not to embody it in the Constitution.

After some resolutions dealing with labour questions, the Convention next proceeded to the election of officers. Count Plunkett and Mr. Griffith then announced their withdrawal from candidature for the Presidency in favour of Mr. de Valera, who was unanimously elected President—an office which Mr. Griffith has previously filled for six years. When the name of Mr. John MacNeill was mentioned as a member of the Executive, Madame Markievicz protested against his election on the ground of his attitude at the time of the rising. Mr. de Valera intervened in a somewhat embittered discussion to say that he knew what happened better than any living man, and that, while fault might be found with Mr. MacNeill's judgment, there was no tribunal understanding what took place would do other than acquit him of anything like cowardice or dishonesty. Finally he closed the discussion with the remark that it was for the delegates by their votes to say whether Mr. MacNeill did not deserve to be honoured by his countrymen. In the subsequent voting Mr. MacNeill was returned as first member of the Executive Committee. In the voting for the Vice-Presidents Count Plunkett received 386 votes, Mr. Griffith, 1,197, and Father O'Flanagan 786. The two last named were thus elected Vice-Presidents; Mr. W. T. Cosgrave and Mr. Ginnell were elected Hon. Treasurers, and Mr. Austin Stack and Mr. Darrell Figgis Hon. Secretaries, while the Executive Committee was constituted of twenty-four persons. Most of the first day's sitting was occupied by a protracted dis-



cussion, which extended into the second day, on schemes of organisation prepared by Mr. de Valera and Mr. Cathal Burgess. The latter's scheme favoured a small business-like Executive; Mr. de Valera recommended a scheme which purposely made the representation on the National Council large, in order to show the country that *Sinn Fein* was a democratic organisation, that it would be run by the people themselves, and that those they elected would not be able to machine them. Finally the scheme submitted by Mr. de Valera was adopted. It was agreed that the membership fee should be one shilling a year, and that a club having a paid up membership of 150 should be entitled to three delegates on the National Council, 200 to four delegates, and 250 to five, on payment of £1 in addition to the affiliation fee for each delegate above two, no club in any case to have more than five delegates.

After Mr. Ginnell and Mr. McGuinness had moved and seconded a resolution expressing the gratitude of the Convention to Count Plunkett and Mr. Griffith for having withdrawn from the contest for the Presidency in favour of Mr. de Valera, the new President addressed the Convention. Mr. de Valera said that by his unanimous election the people of Ireland had endorsed the vote of the people of East Clare, and declared to the world that the policy which he had put before the electors of East Clare was the policy of the people of all Ireland. In the course of his speech he referred to theological criticism of the *Sinn Fein* movement, and said that the condition of reasonable hope of success which justified rebellion against an oppressive authority was one of which they should take advantage.

Their flag was the flag of the Irish Republic. "We have," concluded Mr. de Valera, "nailed that flag to the mast; we shall never lower it, and I

ask you all, in the words in which Grattan saluted Ireland a nation in his time, to salute that flag, nailed to the mast, which we will never lower, and say '*Esto perpetua.*'" Before the Convention closed resolutions were passed calling on all nations at the Peace Conference to sanction Ireland's claim to independence; "repudiating an English nominated Convention."

In connection with the *Sinn Fein* Convention we may note a certain divergence which had earlier become manifest between the extreme political Nationalist movement and the Irish Labour movement, though the two movements had for a moment fused and met in the Rebellion of 1916. The Convention passed two resolutions dealing with labour questions. One asserted the right of Labour to fair and reasonable wages; the other called upon Irish workers who were members of trade unions with headquarters in Great Britain to sever their connection with such organisations. Spokesmen of the Labour movement, which shortly afterwards established an independent weekly newspaper under the general direction of Mr. Thomas Johnston, Past President of the Irish Trades Union Congress, were quick to join issue with *Sinn Fein* on these resolutions. They pointed out that the first was of a platonic character to which any association of employers might have assented without demur, and that the second ignored the conditions of the development of the Irish Labour movement, which could not afford to match the political nationalism of *Sinn Fein* with industrial nationalism. Against this doctrine they urged that, apart from the largely unskilled labour indifferently grouped and organised in the Irish Transport Workers' Union, skilled workers in Ireland were relatively too few and too dispersed to stand aside from the British trade union system; the most important bodies of



skilled workmen in Ireland—such as the railwaymen, the engineers and allied tradesmen, and the builders—depended so much in the present stage of their development upon their unions and federations with headquarters in Great Britain that to sever them from the British labour movement (especially at a time when that movement was taking active steps to extend its influence in the national life) would compromise the whole basis of the growth of trade union organisation in Ireland.

A divergence between *Sinn Fein* and the Irish Labour movement was, indeed, inevitable. The mating of insurgent Nationalism and insurgent Labour in the Easter Week rising was inherently an instable union. The whole gospel of James Connolly, the real driving force behind that rising, was a preaching of nationalism in economic terms: he sought always to interpret and express the Irish struggle for political freedom in terms of, and as an integral part of, the international struggle for the economic emancipation of the proletariat. Connolly did not die for Irish nationalism in the political sense; he died, in Mr. Robert Lynd's apt phrase, as "Ireland's first Socialist martyr." But *Sinn Fein* in its later manifestation, implicated as it were almost by accident in what was essentially a revolt of the Dublin slums and acquiring afterwards the reflected glory of his martyrdom in the cause of Socialism, did not perpetuate his gospel. *Sinn Fein* developed as a Nationalist movement, pure and simple. Its economic theories were not necessarily, or even probably, those which claim the allegiance of the modern Labour movement. It had not seriously modified the concept of freedom as it was preached by the essentially political revolutionaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its outlook and ideals were not manifestly less *bourgeois* than



those of Young Ireland. Alone among the strictly *Sinn Fein* leaders—apart from representatives of the Labour wing who still acted with *Sinn Fein* like Madame Markievicz—Mr. Darrell Figgis devoted some attention to social problems. Mr. de Valera, in his references to the question in his speeches, sought rather to postpone the consideration of Labour's claims until after the achievement of political freedom.

Though a measure of contact was still maintained, the Irish Labour movement had already taken steps to establish a strong and independent working-class political party in Ireland. At the Derry Trades' Union Congress in August, 1917, a scheme was adopted for organising those active members of the trade unions who desired to promote the growth of a political Irish Labour Party. The industrial organisation of the Irish Labour movement, though still weak, had now reached a point which provided an adequate basis for political action. Within the past two years trade unionism in Ireland had undergone a very considerable development. The most powerful body of trade unionists, the Irish Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen, had increased its own membership many-fold, and, utilising to the full its unequalled opportunities for carrying propaganda into every part of the country, had given a great impetus to the trade union movement in general. A basis had been established for a "triple alliance" of Irish Labour composed of the railwaymen, the transport workers, and the agricultural labourers—which last almost entirely unorganised class had been made the special objective of the propaganda conducted by the railwaymen. Upon this foundation of expanding trade unionism was established the political Irish Labour Party. After the Derry Congress a circular letter was addressed by the National

Executive of the Congress to the branches of affiliated unions urging them to adopt the scheme and secure as large a number of subscribing members as possible. The scheme proposed that, where trade unions did not join the party collectively, individuals who were *bona fide* members of trade unions should be eligible for membership. These provisions recognised, on the one hand, that "the affiliated unions contain a proportion of members who are in definite active sympathy with the Irish Labour Party, but having a large number who, while vaguely sympathetic, are not conscious of any personal association with the party;" and on the other hand that "there are societies or branches of societies which are as a whole opposed to the Irish Labour Party, but which contain a minority who desire to become actively associated with us"—this applying chiefly, of course, to North East Ulster. Before the end of 1917 more than a hundred thousand members had already subscribed; a very remarkable number if industrial conditions in Ireland are borne in mind. In this situation industrial, as apart from purely political, discontent tended more and more to group itself behind the Irish Labour Party rather than behind *Sinn Fein*.

Before resuming our narrative of events in Ireland during the sitting of the Convention we must make a further and larger digression, and devote some space to the *Sinn Fein* proposition that the case of Ireland would be considered at the Peace Conference. "By this they (the *Sinn Feiners*) mean," wrote Mr. Bernard Shaw, "that when the quarrel between the Central and the Ottoman Empires on the one side, and the United States of America, the British Empire, the French Republic, Italy, Japan, &c., &c., on the other, comes to be settled the plenipotentiaries of these Powers, at the magic words, 'Gentlemen, IRELAND!' will



rise reverently, sing 'God Save Ireland,' and postpone all their business until they have redressed the wrongs of Rosaleen.' It is easy, of course, to be funny at the expense of this aspect of the *Sinn Fein* programme, but the basis of the *Sinn Fein* claim for Irish representation at the Peace Conference is worth examining. When Mr. Asquith spoke in the first autumn of the war (in Dublin, curiously enough) of a settlement of Europe on national lines—"Room," he said, "must be found, and kept, for the independent existence and free development of the smaller nationalities"—he was at once challenged by Mr. Arthur Griffith and other editors of *Sinn Fein* newspapers to apply that principle to Ireland. It was at that time, however, sufficient to say that Ireland, whatever her abstract and historical rights, as compared with those of Belgium, Serbia, Bohemia, might amount to, had, through Mr. John Redmond, given her consent to be regarded as a British and domestic, not as an international, problem. The situation changed when, as a sequel to the rising, the *Sinn Fein* Republicans, openly separatist, began to displace the Redmondites at bye-elections: when, in other words, it seemed possible that, were full consideration to be given to the local national desire, acting by way of a plebiscite, an Irish Republic would be the result. Thus Irishmen read in the newspapers that the peace of Europe would be a nationalist peace—a peace, that is, which would include not only the restoration of Belgium and Serbia, but also the creation of new national States and the cohesion of old ones, along the lines of the ascertained will of majorities. How would an Ireland, voting *Sinn Fein*, be left out of such a peace? If the Tchecho-Slovaks should have independence—*vide* the Allied terms of January, 1917—why not the Irish? And as for the question of minorities, were not the Germans in Bohemia more



numerous than the "British Garrison" in Ireland? It was argued that no comparison could be made between the German rule of subject States and the British government of Ireland: that within the British Empire "room" could—nay, had—been found for the development, etc., of free nationalities; compromise and give and take were possible here as they were not in Central Europe. But if the Irish persistently held the contrary opinion, what then? Great Britain had, through authentic spokesmen, scrapped not only the Unionist case of the historical necessity of the absorption of small nations by large, but also had certainly weakened the Home Rule case, which laid stress on compromise and renunciations for the average good; the principle of self-determination, fully conceded, would permit Ireland to go to the devil in her own fashion. The question became a matter of Irish choice purely, not a matter of what might be wisest for Ireland, or best for the Empire as a whole, or for the world. Mr. Bernard Shaw, who did not believe in "small nationalities," and had even thrown doubt on Belgian integrity, had the right of remaining unaffected by the logic of *Sinn Fein*; but what of Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Asquith, and even of Mr. Balfour?

We pass from the logic of the *Sinn Fein* proposal to its practical possibilities. Early in the war the Irish extremists of the Republican Brotherhood, relying on the policy of Casement, put their trust in German victory. Casement in his published statements did not attribute to Germany any peculiar devotion to the principle of nationality. He merely argued that the creation of an independent State which looked out upon the Atlantic would be to the *interests* of Germany. He assumed a peace dictated by Germany. In that case Germany would raise the questions of Ireland, Egypt, India and Poland; not for the

love of the *beaux yeux* of these places but because it would pay her to adopt the principles of national self-determination where they affected the *Entente* countries. When it became evident that Germany would not dictate the peace the prophetic part of Casement's writings had to be discarded. Even before the rising of 1916, the German aim was a negotiated peace, a peace from which Germany might, indeed, secure great advantages, but which certainly ruled out any attempt on her part to weaken Great Britain at the vital point of Ireland. There was still the chance of a complete Allied victory, and what had *Sinn Fein* to expect from that? Not much on their own showing, so long as they represented the British professions in favour of small nations as merely hypocritical! In any evidence there might be as to the attitude of France, in most of the evidence as to the American attitude, lay little hope enough. America and the British Dominions would not go further than to urge Ireland's right to Home Rule of the Redmondite pattern. We imagine that "Prussian Militarism is finally destroyed," that Alsace-Lorraine, German Poland, Belgium, Serbia are restored, and Austria split up; simultaneously the Irish people by a clear majority claim a desire for independent statehood. Great Britain refuses (as, according to the *Sinn Fein* conception of her character, she must refuse) to accede to that desire. The net gain of the *Sinn Feiners* is the mere satisfaction of being able to say, "we told you so." There remained the likelihood of a "drawn war," a peace of bargain and barter, in which case Great Britain would surely speak with some moral consistency when she negatived the separatist proposals of *Sinn Fein*. She might quote what Herr Kautsky, the German minority Socialist, said in reference to the sugges-



tions of Count Reventlow for a division of the British Empire:—

“The falling apart of a great State into several small States is particularly alarming if it is a consequence of a falling off in its power, and a consequence of its increasing democratisation, while meanwhile a great neighbouring State still exists with unbroken power. The splitting up of the great democratic State into several smaller States, then, signifies nothing more than the weakening of its democratic power of defence against its neighbours’ weapon of power.”

In a sense, however, Ireland has already “gone to the Peace Conference.” The terms upon which the war should be concluded have been publicly debated among the Governments and parties of the belligerent Powers; in these debates the name of Ireland has been mentioned more than once; and it was undoubtedly owing to the growth of *Sinn Fein* that the settlement of the Irish problem took on the character of a “war necessity” for the British Government. The German Government, the Russian Bolsheviks and a section at least of American opinion all asked “What of Ireland?” as a test of Great Britain’s sincerity in proposing to redraw the map of Europe. It was an awkward question, to say the least of it, for British statesmanship. Although neither President Wilson in his various messages, nor the Pope in any of his peace appeals, alluded to Ireland, the general principles which they had enunciated could be interpreted in the *Sinn Fein* sense of a plebiscite. Certainly the right of Ireland to a liberal measure of Home Rule might be deduced from the President’s pronouncements. As regards other peace proposals, those of the German majority Socialists mentioned Ireland by name; and here the solution of self-government within the Empire



was openly suggested. The German Socialists rejected the solution of independence for subject nationalities of both Allied and enemy Powers. From Italy and France no utterance on the subject of Ireland has been reported. The British Labour Party supported the Georgian proposals of a Convention. On the other hand, the left wing of English Radicalism, the pacifist, intellectuals, revolutionists, had no objection in theory to the complete independence for Ireland. But, as their attitude on the question of the Slav nationalities in Austria-Hungary showed, they objected to a further deluge of blood for such ends. The Russian position was somewhat similar. Trotsky and Lenin proposed a peace of renunciation, and were themselves ready to renounce portions of historical Russia in the name of the principle of self-determination. But they hardly expected the Central and *Entente* Powers to follow their example to the full. "You are too logical," an English newspaper correspondent told Trotsky. "No," Trotsky replied, "if we were logical we would declare war against England on Ireland's account."

In January, 1918, both the British Premier and the American President made important statements on war aims, in the course of which it appeared that the idea of breaking up the Austro-Hungarian Empire into independent fragments had been abandoned. Here again the Home Rule solution appeared. It is at the time of writing a far cry to that disintegration of Empires, that "Russian" peace of mutual renunciations, which alone will bring the establishment of an Irish Republic within the sphere of practical politics. *Sinn Fein*, it is conceded, has caused discomfort to British statesmen, and perhaps the Rebellion has even reacted upon a foreign audience. But if Ireland were truly an acute international problem

she would be, with Alsace-Lorraine and Poland, one of the obstacles to peace—and this, of course, she is not.

After the *Sinn Fein* Convention and the scare at the beginning of November the public activity of the Party appeared to be somewhat diminished for the remainder of the year. Mr. de Valera and other leaders addressed one or two meetings, but for the most part the remainder of the year was devoted quietly to organisation work. In the course of November *Sinn Fein* extended its influence in a new direction. A circular was addressed to the clergy of various denominations throughout Ireland setting forth that “the grave danger of food shortage during the coming winter and until next harvest, owing to excessive exportation of Irish food products, the consumption by the large garrison now stationed in Ireland, and the submarine obstacle to importation, imposes a common duty upon us all, and has led the *Sinn Fein* Executive to found a Food Committee to organise and co-ordinate local effort, to avert a repetition of the calamity of 1847, by retaining in Ireland sufficient food for the entire population, and making arrangements to have it available in time and measure necessary for distribution in Dublin and other cities, in County Donegal, and wherever else famine is to be dreaded.” The circular proceeded to invite information as to local stocks and kindred matters “for our guidance in constructing a scheme embracing the whole country.” The Food Committee continued the activity thus begun, and its intervention in the question of food shortage, which was exciting some public concern, assisted materially in promoting the popularity of *Sinn Fein*.

Towards the end of 1917 the Irish Unionist newspapers began once more to write gravely about “the state of Ireland.” They were moved to pro-



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tests by a new manifestation of "unrest" which had made its appearance in those districts in the south and west where the *Sinn Fein* influence was predominant. About the beginning of December bands of masked and armed men began to raid country houses and farms by night in search of arms, which they seized. In the course of December and January a number of raids of this nature took place, sometimes having as their objective the rifles of soldiers home on leave. In the majority of cases no violence was offered, but in one such affair in Tipperary an old man was killed in endeavouring to resist the seizure of his son's rifle. In January an attack was made on a police post near Ennis in County Clare. Two more remarkable incidents occurred—in Donegal and Cork—when bands of masked and armed men forcibly rescued deserters from the custody of military escorts.

At the beginning of 1918 a new opportunity offered for *Sinn Fein* to try its strength against the Parliamentary Party, this time in Ulster. A vacancy occurred in the representation of South Armagh, a Nationalist seat in one of the "six counties," with a strong Unionist minority. *Sinn Fein* had now won seats in all the three southern provinces, and, after some slight hesitation, it decided to put to the test the effect of its propaganda, which had been actively conducted throughout the northern province, upon the Nationalists of Ulster. The Parliamentary Party's candidate was Mr. Patrick Donnelly, a Newry solicitor of much local popularity. *Sinn Fein* selected as its candidate Dr. Patrick McCartan, who was at the time under detention at Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he had been stopped while endeavouring to make his way back to Ireland. Dr. McCartan had gone to America in the capacity of "Ambassador of the Irish Republic to the United States"; and



here we may conveniently glance for a moment at the relations of *Sinn Fein* with that country.

Under date "Washington, 23rd July, 1917," the *New York World* announced that "President Wilson received to-day two communications from the *Sinn Fein* organisation setting forth plans for American aid to obtain complete independence and the establishment of a Republic for Ireland. The same two communications were also delivered to Congress." The *World's* message added that one communication was signed by Dr. McCartan "on behalf of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic"; the other by twenty-six officers, headed by Mr. de Valera—"of the forces formed independently in Ireland to secure the complete liberation of the Irish nation." Dr. McCartan's letter reminded the President and Congress of the part which Irishmen had played in the development of the United States and their defence in time of war, and recounted that Ireland had maintained a struggle for independence for seven hundred and fifty years. It questioned England's good faith at any time in granting genuine Home Rule, and asserted that Irish Unionists "were encouraged by the Royal Family and aristocracy of England to threaten civil war rather than submit to a Home Rule Government." It declared that recent elections in Ireland had demonstrated anew the established fact that the Republicans represented the vast majority of the people of Ireland, and concluded:—"We have no doubt about the good-will of the American Government and people, and, while prepared when the opportunity arises to assert our independence by the one force that commands universal respect, and to accept aid from any quarter to that end, we hope Americans will see their way to aid in doing for Ireland what they did for Cuba. We feel that they will assist in re-

paying to Ireland the sacrifices and contributions made by her sons in the cause of America."

The next public news of Dr. McCartan came on October 24th, when a Reuter message from New York announced the arrest there by the Secret Police of Baron von Recklinghausen, a German agent who was declared to have intimate associations with *Sinn Fein*, and of William Mellowes, who led the rising in Galway in Easter Week, 1916, and, after hiding in a remote part of Connemara, ultimately succeeded in making his escape to America by a South of Ireland port. It was simultaneously announced that the Canadian authorities had arrested Dr. McCartan at Halifax on an outward bound ship in the port. The New York message declared that all three men were implicated in a plot to bring about another rebellion in Ireland, and that the American authorities, learning of Mellowes's association with Dr. McCartan, whom he proposed to follow to Ireland, advised the Canadian authorities, who then effected the arrest at Halifax. These arrests, the *New York Times* asserted, frustrated a rebellion planned for Easter, 1918.

Dr. McCartan, before this adventure, had been a dispensary doctor in County Tyrone, and had been identified with the Nationalist Volunteers from their inception. He lent his motor-car for the Larne gun-running exploit of 1914, when the Ulster Volunteers imported quantities of arms and ammunition, justifying his action on that occasion on the ground that he was ready to assist any effort to secure arms for Irishmen of any section. After the Easter rising of 1916 he disappeared for some time. Returning to Tyrone at the end of 1916, in the following February he was among those deported to England, whence he returned to take part in the Longford election, afterwards working his passage to America as "Ambassador

of the Irish Republic," as an ordinary seaman. During the South Armagh election *Sinn Fein* speakers contrasted this incident with Mr. T. P. O'Connor's mission to the United States in a British cruiser. Entering the field in the election somewhat late *Sinn Fein* conducted a whirlwind campaign in the constituency, under the personal direction of Mr. de Valera. Large numbers of Irish Volunteers were drafted into the district. *Sinn Fein* suffered from the fact that, in an election held in the precincts of the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland, and under the immediate shadow of Cardinal Logue's warning issued a month earlier, Dr. McCartan's candidature received little or no open support from the priesthood, who, however, were not conspicuously active on the side of the Parliamentary Party. The Nationalists also brought the full force of the party machine to bear in the election under the guidance of Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin. The Unionist vote, numbering more than a thousand on a register of about six thousand, was recognised as capable of playing a decisive part in the election. Officially no action was taken by the Ulster Unionist Council, but an unofficial Unionist and temperance candidate was put forward—it was suggested with the Machiavellian object of indirectly assisting Dr. McCartan's candidature and, in the event of his success, providing the Ulster Unionists with a new argument against Home Rule. Under pressure of the general Unionist opinion, however, this candidature was withdrawn before the polling day. The majority of Unionists in the constituency abstained from voting; those who did vote voted for the Parliamentary Party's candidate. After an exciting contest, which produced no new arguments, the result of the poll was declared on February 2nd. It showed that *Sinn Fein* had suffered its first electoral defeat.



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Mr. Donnelly, the Parliamentary Party's candidate, headed the poll with a majority of more than a thousand—a majority which exceeded all expectations, and could not be ascribed to the Unionist vote. The South Armagh election result, declared twelve months almost to a day since *Sinn Fein's* first victory in South Roscommon, came at a time when the deliberations of the Irish Convention had reached an acutely critical stage and the Government had decided upon intervention.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CONVENTION.

HUMANLY, if not politically, speaking, the Irish Convention was a representative body of the nation. All types of Irishmen, if not all the opinions of Irishmen, were to be found at the meetings at Regent House, Trinity College, and in Belfast and Cork. "How many orators there are," wrote an Englishman the other day as he contemplated the historical portraits in the Dublin National Gallery—"how many duellists, patriots, rebels of whom nothing but their personal attractiveness is remembered."\* The normal Irishman, this English observer added, does not seem to be creative; but he is dramatic and expressive, highly endowed with wit and social gifts. It was a generalisation of which the Irish Convention reminded one. That this assembly had any general quality of greatness no one could pretend. But it was rich in personality, in men of versatile natures whose names would reach posterity not in books, but in the oral traditions of their country.

Perhaps a score of the ninety odd members had a topical reputation—were persons, that is to say, with whom the newspapers had established a certain familiarity; and of this score, three, let us say, were assured already of a place in history. These were Mr. Redmond, Sir Horace Plunkett, Mr. George Russell—the one a leading Parliamentary of his time, the other an initiator in the field of social reform,, the third the poet "Æ," comrade of George Moore and Yeats in Irish literary enterprise, who in recent years had appeared as a

\* *Explorations and Reflections.* By an Englishman. Dublin : Maunsell & Co.

pamphleteer and a political idealist. To most Englishmen Mr. Redmond for his Parliamentary tact and eloquence, Sir Horace Plunkett for his public spirit and leadership in the agricultural co-operative movement, represented what was most distinguished in contemporary Ireland.

Mr. Redmond, now in his 67th year, had entered the House of Commons in 1881 as member for New Ross. He had stood by Parnell during the "Split" of 1891, and he subsequently led a minority of the National Party with tact and eloquence. When the parliamentary movement reunited it was under his Chairmanship. Always regarded at heart as a Moderate—certain of his speeches in America notwithstanding—Mr. Redmond, owing to his attitude on the war, enjoyed at the time of the summons to the Convention a very considerable popularity among his Unionist fellow countrymen. "He had fought for Home Rule for thirty years," says a German admirer, the translator of Synge, "and had directed his life to turning a dream into a reality. . . . The name Redmond sounds hard and weighty; and hard, stubborn and weighty is the man."

Sir Horace Plunkett, a younger man by three years, had led a varied life. The son of an Anglo-Irish peer, he was educated at Eton and Oxford, and had engaged during his youth in cattle ranching in America; he returned to Ireland to promote agricultural co-operation, was for a short time a Unionist M.P., when he displeased the extremists of his party, but won the confidence of Mr. Balfour and the leaders of English Conservatism. He was Vice-President of the Irish Department of Agriculture from 1899-1907. During the Ulster crisis he threw out many suggestions for compromise in letters and addresses, which won a great measure of attention from the Press. In 1914 he made a striking proposal that Ulster Unionists should



consent to give the Home Rule Parliament a temporary trial, exclusion, if they wished for it, to take place after a fixed number of years. The proposal was, however, rejected by the party concerned.

"Æ" too had his fervent admirers outside of Ireland as well as within it—and not only among readers of poetry and students of mysticism, but also among statesmen and economists. An Ulsterman and a Protestant by birth, by poetic temperament a sympathiser with the hero legends of Gaelic Ireland, long editorship of an agricultural journal, the *Irish Homestead*, had brought him into contact with the practical realities of the social and political situation in his country. In his *National Being*, published in 1916, he had sought to describe an order of society in which democracy would prevail in the economic life of Ireland, and aristocratic ideals in her political and intellectual life. The book was an "imaginative meditation on the state of Ireland"; but it contained many very "actual" suggestions with regard to systems of representative government, the proposals set out in Chapter XIV. for representation of particular interests in the Irish government reminding one of P. J. Proudhon's application of his famous "federative principle." In his pamphlet of 1917, *Thoughts for an Irish Convention*, Mr. Russell addressed himself more directly to the actual crisis in Irish affairs. After explaining with a notable impartiality the point of view of the *Sinn Féiners*, the Nationalist Parliamentarians and the Unionists, he reached the conclusion that the natural compromise for Irishmen to adopt would be the solution of Dominion Self-Government with fiscal liberty. The pamphlet, if it did not carry conviction to the Ulster minority, created a remarkable impression among the Unionists in the south of Ireland, and among Nationalists of every variety; and it seemed that

the Government had taken a very proper course when subsequently Mr. Russell's name appeared in the list of the fifteen nominated members of the Irish Convention.

Among the politicians present at the Convention next in importance to Mr. Redmond was Mr. Joseph Devlin, the Nationalist member for West Belfast, whose future as Irish leader had, before the rise of the *Sinn Fein* movement, seemed to be assured. To no other man, personally, did the success of the Convention mean so much as to Mr. Devlin. Through it he might regain a lost ascendancy in Irish politics; failure here would involve in all probability the final conquest of Ireland by *Sinn Fein* or some new group of politicians, and the extinction of the political career of a man, unquestionably able and energetic, and not yet past his prime. But except for Mr. Redmond and Mr. Devlin the Convention contained few parliamentarians of note.

The Ulster Unionist Council had decided, wisely enough, to present its case through persons of local standing rather than through the Orange M.Ps., only one of whom, Mr. H. T. Barrie, appeared at the Convention. The abler sort of Northern Protestant does not enter Parliament. That he has little talent or inclination for politics is shown, significantly, by the fact that the trusted leader of the "Ulster" cause is a Dubliner, Sir Edward Carson. Lord Londonderry, Colonel Wallace, a well-known Orangeman, Mr. Knight, and Sir George Clarke, composed with Mr. Barrie, M.P., the important delegation from the Ulster Unionist Council; and it was upon their action that all eyes were turned. This Council had conducted the fight against Home Rule during the years previous to the war, and these men had organised the Covenant and had supported the arming and drilling of the Ulster

Volunteers. Would they now abandon that position in deference to the alleged Imperial necessity of an Irish settlement? In the south of Ireland little was known, personally, of the five men. But it was reported that in Sir A. McDowell, a solicitor with a large Northern practice and one of the Government nominees, "Ulster" had found an advocate of unusual power. Sir A. McDowell, as it happened, was prevented by illness from attending many meetings of the Convention, and the burden of presenting the case of the Northern Unionists fell chiefly on Lord Londonderry, a descendant of Castlereagh, the promoter of the Union, and upon Mr. Pollock, the able spokesman of Northern capitalism, a delegate from the Belfast Chamber of Commerce.

There were present, besides the above-named, others who had been associated with the Carsonite movement of 1912-14, and were still in thorough sympathy with the statement of the Covenant. Several Chairmen of County Councils and Corporations in Ulster, including the Duke of Abercorn from Tyrone, were also representative Unionists of the northern type. Dr. Crozier of Armagh, the Primate, had joined in the No-Surrender Campaign before the war, and another stern Covenanter was Dr. Irwin, the Moderator of the General Assembly of Presbyterians. The Ulster Unionists composed a comparatively small minority of the whole Convention; but they had the Government's assurance that they entered it without prejudice to their previous declaration of *non possumus*. The Southern Unionists acted separately, and the Labour delegates, with one exception, were not of the Covenanting disposition.

Of the seven Labour delegates two served on the Grand Committee of the Convention. These were Mr. Robert Waugh and Alderman McCarron. Mr. Waugh, the representative of the Belfast and



District Building Trades Federation, was a delegate of wide experience in labour affairs, having earlier been Organising Secretary of the Amalgamated and General Union of Carpenters and Joiners. He was appointed one of the Irish representatives to the Labour Party Conference at Nottingham in January, 1918, and some years before had represented Ireland at a similar Conference in Glasgow. Alderman James McCarron was leader of the Labour representatives in Derry Corporation, and Chairman of the Public Health Committee. He had long been the Irish delegate of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, and was a well-known speaker at Trade Union Congresses. A man of advanced views on questions of social reform, he was a strong supporter of Mr. Redmond, but a determined opponent of the partition scheme. Of the other five Labour delegates, Mr. H. T. Whitley, a member of the Belfast Branch of the Typographical Union, and one of the leading trade unionists in the city, represented in the Convention the Belfast and District Trades' Council, and Mr. C. McKay, also of Belfast, the Shipbuilding and Engineering Trades' Federation. Mr. J. Murphy, of Dublin, representing the Irish Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen, was one of the most active officials of that Union, which in recent months had very greatly increased its membership and influence all over Ireland, especially in Ulster. Mr. John Hanna, representing the Belfast shipyard workers, was, perhaps, the only Labour delegate of whom it could fairly be said that he was a politician first and a labour man afterwards. A foreman in Harland and Wolff's yards, Mr. Hanna was President of the Queen's Island Unionist Club, and presided at the mass meeting of Ulster trade unionists held in the Ulster Hall on April 29th, 1914, to protest against the passing of the Home Rule Bill. Somewhat in

the same category, on the opposite side, one might place Mr. Thomas Lundon, M.P. (Land and Labour Association) a member of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party, who was to be regarded as more or less representative of the interests of labour in the rural districts.

Chairmen of County and Urban Councils, Mayors and Lord Mayors were a large block of the assembly. These, except as voters, did not, perhaps, count for much; and owing to recent changes in the opinion of the south, their representative right might have been called in question. Most were at the outset of the proceedings strong "party" men. But from the historically Nationalist point of view how suitable it was that (as actually happened) a Byrne should come from Wicklow, a Reilly from Cavan, a Power from Waterford, a MacMurrough Kavanagh from Carlow! The names had tribal and regionalist associations running down the centuries. If the Unionists of Tyrone produced a British Duke for their representative, the Nationalists of Carlow provided the Convention with a descendant of the ancient kings of Leinster, a landlord and a Protestant, who was also a Home Ruler. Dublin Corporation sent to the Convention a man of eloquence in Councillor O'Neill, Lord Mayor of the city, the only member at Regent House who had suffered arrest in connection with the Rebellion. Councillor O'Neill had been arrested—albeit in error—during the martial *régime* of Sir John Maxwell. "There was a man," he told his fellow townsmen on the occasion of his election to the Mayoral Chair, "who was despised and rejected by men. . . . The soldiers spat upon him. . . . He stands before you now."

The representatives of the Southern Unionist Organisation were well chosen men of tolerant disposition, but among them shone no bright parti-

cular star, although they had called upon an ex-Cabinet Minister in the person of Lord Midleton, who played a very important part in the deliberations. More or less of Southern Unionist complexion were such able and distinguished Irishmen as Lord Dunraven, Lord Mayo and Lord Oranmore and Brown (the last two representatives of the Irish Peers), the Provost of Trinity, Dr. Mahaffy, and Dr. Bernard, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin. Lord Dunraven, politician, traveller, author, sportsman, reforming landowner, was one of the several old but still active figures of the Convention. After presiding with success at the Irish Land Conference of 1902, he had endeavoured to promote a settlement of the political question along the lines of Devolution, and from the Tory Imperialist standpoint. Lord Oranmore, a Conservative and former Unionist, had, previous to the assembling of the Convention, expressed the opinion that if Home Rule were granted it should be in its widest form next to separation, namely, Repeal of the Union. His speeches on Irish affairs in the House of Lords had always been characterised by a remarkable independence and originality. Rev. Dr. Mahaffy, wit, courtier, scholar, appeared at the Convention as the representative of the Elizabethan institution of Trinity College. He it was who had said that in Ireland the "inevitable never happens, the impossible always occurs." Very hostile to the Young Ireland of the Gaelic League and a bitter commentator on the Rebellion—one who could see nothing in the events of '16 but an envious assault of the "have-nots" upon the "haves" (he believed that Pearse aimed at seizing the Provostship of Trinity College)—Dr. Mahaffy was frequently ridiculed by Nationalists as supreme type of the Anglo-Irish *shoneen*. But with his clever tongue he gives back as good as he got; nor can a man so



brilliant, a man familiar with the cosmopolitan societies of Europe, be really suspected of sharing the political or religious views of the narrowest sort of Irish Protestant. Indeed it is suspected that the Provost combined with his "superiority" to Irish ideals a very hearty contempt for the modern British effort to govern his country.

A very notable feature of the Convention was the amount of ability which resided in the delegations from the two Churches. Two of the four Roman Catholic Bishops, Dr. Kelly and Dr. O'Donnell, were well-known Redmondites, whereas Dr. Harty and Dr. MacRory represented fairly accurately the feeling of the Independent Nationalists. Dr. Kelly, a close personal friend of Mr. Redmond, belonged to that division of the clerical party which had openly denounced the Rebellion of Easter Week, and which desired to reconcile the Home Rule claim with Imperial interests. A man of views, a student of Irish statistics and finance, he had been for many years in close contact with public affairs, having sat on the Royal Commission on Irish Finance (1910). The Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Harty, another of the Maynooth delegates represented a similar tendency of opinion in the Church. A different type was the Bishop of Raphoe—an O'Donnell from Tyrconnell—an older man, the possessor of many popular qualities, more of a democrat and an enthusiast, a very keen politician. Dr. O'Donnell, although a leading figure of Mr. Redmond's United Irish League, had won the affection of "Irish" Irelanders by his energetic efforts in the North-West for the preservation of the Irish language. He was himself the one native speaker at the Convention. Being also a learned theologian he did good service to Nationalists when during the debates Orangemen raised the question of their religious objections to Home Rule. By common

consent the Bishop of Raphoe proved himself at the Convention to be among the two or three ablest men on the Nationalist side. In the representation from the Church of Ireland the genial and conciliatory Primate, Dr. Crozier, a Covenanter, and Dr. Bernard, Archbishop of Dublin, scholarly, suave, critical-minded, with English sympathies, stood out prominently.

Lastly come the members nominated by the Government. To several of these—including Lord Dunraven, Mr. George Russell, and Sir Horace Plunkett—allusion has already been made. Among the others there were Sir Crawford MacCullagh, a prominent member of the Belfast City Council; Sir Bertram Windle, President of the University College, Cork, a scientist of repute; Sir William Whitla, a Belfast physician, and Sir William Goulding of Dublin, a southern captain of industry. In the list there stood out two notabilities, Mr. W. M. Murphy and Lord MacDonnell, men past the age of seventy who had already exercised an important influence on Irish affairs. This was the Mr. Murphy, tramway owner and railway builder, who had upheld the Dublin employers against the assault of James Larkin during the famous strike in the winter of 1913-14. The son of a contractor in West Cork, Mr. Murphy came from the same part of Ireland as the Sullivans, T. D. and A. M., and the celebrated brothers, T. M. and Maurice Healy, and he joined this group in Parnell's Parliamentary Party of the "eighties." All turned bitterly anti-Parnellite during the "Split," but objecting to the policy of Mr. Dillon formed a third party of their own which continually harassed the recognised leaders, Mr. Dillon, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, and subsequently, Mr. John Redmond, who, it was alleged, continually subordinated Irish to Liberal interests. In time Mr. Murphy left Parliament, but he retained, in spite

of the diversity of his business interests, sufficient leisure to keep an eye on the "Party." He owned in recent years the *Independent*, a half-penny newspaper with a wider circulation than any of the other Dublin journals.

During 1915 the *Independent* combined support of recruiting and the war with vigorous attacks on the Administration and Mr. Redmond. It laid stress on the dangers of the increased taxation of Ireland in connection with the financial clauses of the Home Rule Act, and, after the appointment of Sir Mathew Nathan as Under-Secretary, hinted that deep schemes were afoot to render Irish self-government unworkable and worthless. These imputations of sinister British intentions undoubtedly worked upon Irish nerves during the winter of 1915-16, and Mr. Birrell in his evidence before the Commission on the Rebellion hinted that the influence of the *Independent* was one of the chief difficulties which the Administration had had to encounter. It is needless to say that Mr. Murphy disapproved of the Rising. But he recovered from the shock of that outburst more quickly than did the Redmondite politicians; and soon again he was hard at work undermining the position of the latter and upsetting their plans. His newspaper it was which, by playing on the susceptibilities of the Northern Bishops, did most to upset Mr. Lloyd George's plan of "settlement" in the summer of 1916. Subsequently—though he may not have been without suspicions—Mr. Murphy acquiesced in the next move of the Government, namely, the Convention proposal, and he accepted a place among the nominated members at Regent House, although Mr. T. M. Healy and Mr. William O'Brien, the politicians whose ideas most nearly corresponded with his, had refused to participate in the "farce." An admirer, who wrote of Mr. Murphy at the



time of the Dublin strike, found him "a tall, spare figure, slightly stooped at the shoulders, with a mass of silvery hair framing a benevolent face in which two kindly but piercing grey eyes are firmly set." He has been called the Irish Lord Northcliffe, but the description is not really apt except in the sense that both Lord Northcliffe and Mr. Murphy derive their political influence from the ownership and direction of newspapers. But the Irishman, unlike Lord Northcliffe, has been a man of a few fixed ideas; and if within recent years he gave the public much of what it wanted, this was due to coincidence rather than to design. Indeed, Mr. Murphy's closest political associate has been Mr. T. M. Healy, a man whose boast it has been to be usually in a minority of one.

Lord McDonnell, formerly Sir A. P. McDonnell, is a man of about the same age as Mr. W. M. Murphy; both had a slight advantage in years over the two other notable septuagenarians of the Convention, Lord Dunraven and the Rev. Dr. Mahaffy. Successful in a very different walk of life he had, like Mr Murphy, started life in a Nationalist environment, being the brother of Dr. Mark MacDonnell, once an Irish M.P. Mr. T. P. O'Connor had been his school-fellow in Galway fifty years ago. Then came a long career in India, ending with the Governorship of Bengal. His appointment as Under-Secretary for Ireland in 1902 created extraordinary interest. It was at the time when a Conservative Government of Great Britain was making an effort to deal with Irish nationalism on conciliatory lines, particularly in regard to the land question; and the appointment of a Catholic with Nationalist associations to the most important post in Dublin Castle seemed to betoken revolutionary changes. Lord MacDonnell may not then have been the strong Home Ruler he afterwards became; but certainly he had little in

common with that section of the Irish Unionists which regarded every Conservative Government as the servant of its desires. Mr. William O'Brien, in his *Olive Branch in Irish History*, gives a pen portrait of the Indian Administrator as he appeared at that time. "He . . . somehow suggested a resemblance to an Indian curry such as they serve in all the pride of its four courses at the Goljaas Hotel in Columbo to wayfarers from the mail-boats—a dish of startling richness and variety, but of a distinctly peppery flavour. The only part of the stooped and meagre figure to attract the attention was the head—the head with, perhaps, the provoking note of interrogation of the eyeglass. It was in every sense of the term a *tête carrée*, such as it would seem nothing less penetrating than a bullet could move from its base; the head of a Bismarck, but of a Bismarck whose heart was softer than his head."

When the Land Conference had achieved, or largely achieved, its purpose, a movement was started among the reforming Irish landowners with the object of introducing certain changes in the Irish Government in the sense of self-government. This was what was called Devolution. To this movement the Conservative Cabinet adopted, at first, a benevolent attitude; but, presently, the extremer Unionists in Ireland actively revolted against the Wyndham-MacDonnell régime. When the Irish Parliamentary Party, too, refused to continue the Land Conference truce, the end was near at hand. The position of Under-Secretary in itself meant nothing to Lord MacDonnell, except in so far as it would enable him to be the initiator of experiments in reform. Things fell back upon the old party lines, and Lord MacDonnell, therefore, left Ireland and took a seat upon the Indian Council. He remained, however, a close student of Irish affairs, and he

dealt authoritatively with the Home Rule Bill of 1912 both in his speeches and writings. He had clearly become a convert to Home Rule in its fullest sense of fiscal autonomy, and Nationalists were satisfied at his recall to Ireland to act upon the Convention.

The stated purpose for which the Convention had been summoned was the making of an Irish Constitution. There were, however, not many members of it who either had a knowledge of constitutional history or constitutional forms or were men of practical experience in administration. Lord MacDonnell combined both qualifications. So did Sir Francis Hopwood, the English Secretary (who became Lord Southborough in 1917); he had held many important British appointments, among others that of Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, when he promoted the South African settlement. Two Anglo-Irish Peers, the Earl of Desart, who had been a member of the British Court of Arbitration at the Hague, and the Earl of Granard, Postmaster-General in a former Liberal Government, were men with experience in affairs. Lord Dunraven, the Bishop of Ross and Sir Horace Plunkett had a close acquaintance with the technical side of the Home Rule question.

Among the declared Nationalists at the Convention, Mr. George Russell, Mr. Edward E. Lysaght and Captain Stephen Gwynn contributed the largest share of constructive proposals. Mr. Lysaght, the youngest member of the Convention, and one of the most versatile—a large farmer in County Clare and an author—represented what might be described as the extreme left of the Nationalist movement. Of English education, he had become an ardent Gaelic Leaguer, and knew more about the feelings and aspirations of the young and serious-minded Irish democracy than any other member of the Convention, with the pos-



sible exception of Mr. George Russell. In accepting the Government's invitation, however, Mr. Lysaght made it clear that he did not in any sense pretend to represent either the Gaelic League or *Sinn Féin* movements. Mr. Stephen Gwynn, another Oxford man, the son of a Fellow of Trinity College and the grandson of the rebel Smith O'Brien, combined in himself many of the conflicting tendencies of Irish sentiment. He had been brought up as an Irish Unionist; his early career was that of a successful journalist and literary critic in London. Subsequently the Irish literary movement attracted his attention, and the ideas of the Gaelic League found in him one of their most cultivated adherents. He had even leanings towards *Sinn Féin*, though deprecating the anti-English side of Mr. Arthur Griffith's programme. In 1906 he joined Mr. Redmond's party as member for Galway after an exciting contest. He wrote many books on Irish topics, *To-day and To-Morrow in Ireland*, *The Fair Hills of Ireland*, and the *Famous Cities of Ireland*, and an Irish Novel, *John Maxwell's Marriage*. When the war broke out, he appeared as one of the most determined supporters of Mr. Redmond's point of view, and, though already past fifty, he volunteered for the British Army and served in France.

The Convention, as finally constituted, consisted of the following ninety-five members (in alphabetical order):—Government Nominees (15)—Councillor Patrick Dempsey (Belfast), the Earl of Desart, the Earl of Dunraven, Sir William Goulding, the Earl of Granard, E. E. Lysaght, Sir Crawford McCullagh, Lord MacDonnell, Sir A. McDowell, Dr. Mahaffy, William M. Murphy, Sir Horace Plunkett, George Russell, Sir William Whitla, Sir Bertram Windle. Other delegates (80).—The Duke of Abercorn, Tyrone Co. Council; R. N.

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Anderson, Mayor of Derry; E. H. Andrews, Dublin Chamber of Commerce; H. B. Armstrong, Armagh Co. Council; H. T. Barrie, M.P., Ulster Party; M. K. Barry, Cork Co. Council; Dr. Bernard, Archbishop of Dublin; Sir Henry Blake, Southern Unionist; J. Bolger, Wexford Co. Council; W. Brodrick (Jun.), Youghal U.D.C.; J. Butler, Kilkenny Co. Council; T. C. Butterfield, Lord Mayor of Cork; J. Byrne, Queen's County Co. Council; J. J. Clancy, M.P., Irish Party; Sir G. S. Clark, Ulster Party; Colonel J. J. Clarke, Kerry Co. Council; J. J. Coen, Westmeath Co. Council; D. Condren, Wicklow Co. Council; Colonel R. G. S. Crawford, M.P., Down Co. Council; Dr. Crozier, Primate of All Ireland; J. Devlin, M.P., Irish Party; J. Dooly, King's County Co. Council; Captain W. A. Doran, Louth Co. Council; T. Duggan, Tipperary (North Riding) Co. Council; J. Dunleavy, Donegal Co. Council; T. Fallon, Leitrim Co. Council; John FitzGibbon, M.P., Roscommon Co. Council; J. Flanagan, Ballina U.D.C.; H. Garahan, Longford Co. Council; M. Governey, Carlow U.D.C.; W. Gubbins, Limerick Co. Council; Captain Stephen Gwynn, M.P., Irish Party; T. Halligan, Meath Co. Council; J. Hanna, Labour (Shipyards); T. J. Harbison, Irish Party; Dr. Harty, Archbishop of Cashel; Dr. John Irwin, Moderator; J. Johnston, Lord Mayor of Belfast; Andrew Jameson, Southern Unionist; W. Kavanagh, Carlow Co. Council; Dr. Kelly, Bishop of Ross; J. K. Kett, Clare Co. Council; M. E. Knight, Ulster Party; the Marquis of Londonderry, Ulster Party; T. London, M.P., Labour (Land and Labour Association); J. S. F. McCance, Antrim Co. Council; Alderman J. McCarron, Labour (Derry); M. McDonagh, Galway U.D.C.; J. McDonnell, Galway Co. Council; J. McGarry, Mayo Co. Council; H. G. McGeagh, Lurgan U.D.C.; J. McHugh, Fermanagh Co. Council; C. McKay,

Labour (Shipbuilding and Engineering Trades' Federation); J. McMeekan, Bangor U.D.C.; A. R. McMullen, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, Cork; Dr. McRory, Bishop of Down; the Earl of Mayo, Irish Peer; Viscount Midleton, Southern Unionist; M. J. Minch, Kildare Co. Council; J. Murphy, Labour (National Union of Railwaymen); Dr. O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe; J. O'Dowd, M.P., Sligo Co. Council; C. P. O'Neill, Pembroke U.D.C.; L. O'Neill, Lord Mayor of Dublin; P. J. O'Neill, Dublin Co. Council; Lord Oranmore and Browne, Irish Peer; Dr. O'Sullivan, Mayor of Waterford; P. Peters, Mayor of Clonmel; H. M. Pollock, Belfast Chamber of Commerce; J. B. Powell, Southern Unionist; T. Power, Waterford Co. Council; Stephen Quinn, Mayor of Limerick; John Redmond, M.P., Irish Party; D. Reilly, Cavan Co. Council; M. Slaterry, Tipperary (S. Riding) Co. Council; C. Stewart, Southern Unionist; T. Toal, Monaghan Co. Council; Colonel R. H. Wallace (Ulster Party); R. Waugh, Labour (Belfast and District Building Trades' Federation); H. T. Whiteley, Labour (Belfast and District Trades' Council).\*

Immediately before the assembly of the Convention an addition was made to the Defence of the Realm Regulations declaring it to be unlawful for anyone to violate the secrecy of its proceedings. The prohibition covered both printed publication and public speaking, and forbade any report or statement which described or purported to describe its proceedings, or referred to them, except reports or statements officially authorised by the Chair-

\* The distinguished Secretariat appointed included Mr. Erskine Childers, author of a famous novel *The Riddle of the Sands*. Mr. Childers was a well-known student of Irish politics, and had written the authoritative book *The Framework of Home Rule*. Among his colleagues were Captain Herbert Shaw, sometime Secretary of the Irish Unionist Alliance; Mr. Cruise O'Brien, a member of the Plunkett House Staff; Mr. Callan, a resident magistrate and authority on land purchase; Mr. Shan Bullock, the Ulster novelist, and Mr. Vernon an English public official.



man. It was generally recognised by the friends of the Convention that this prohibition was necessary if its work was not to be hampered, perhaps fatally, by public debate on its proceedings, though on the other hand the secrecy involved a certain atrophy of political thought in Ireland which gave larger scope to the *Sinn Fein* propaganda. The situation was in some respects anomalous. The members of the Convention were not themselves bound to secrecy. A relatively large number of people in Ireland were kept informed of its progress from day to day, and a still larger number gathered a general idea of the course of events within the Convention. In these circumstances it was inevitable that rumours sometimes misleading, or even altogether erroneous, should get abroad. The Irish Press in general, however, loyally observed the regulations during the earlier stages of the Convention, though later it was more honoured in the breach than in the observance, at least in spirit if not in actual fact, in such a manner as to involve a legal offence.

It is not the intention of this book to invade the secrecy of the processes by which the Convention reached its conclusion. The inner history of the Convention will doubtless be written in suitable time by more competent hands. All that will be attempted here is a record of its proceedings so far as these were officially made public, and in so far as they were revealed at the time by other published indications. The Convention, as was mentioned at the close of our first chapter, held its first meeting in Dublin on July 25th. Mr. Duke presided at this session, and after his opening address and the appointment of Sir Francis Hopwood as Secretary, a committee was appointed to advise the Convention on the selection of a suitable Chairman. It unanimously recommended the appointment of Sir Horace Plunkett, and this recommendation was

unanimously adopted. Sir Horace Plunkett then formally took the Chair, and the first day's proceedings terminated with votes of thanks to the Provost and Fellows of Trinity College, and to the Chief Secretary. Large crowds assembled in College Green to witness the first gathering of the Convention. A small group made a hostile demonstration against Mr. Redmond on his departure. Afterwards little public interest in the meetings was displayed. On the following day, July 26th, considerable discussion took place as to the arrangements for the transaction of business. A Preliminary Procedure Committee was appointed to submit proposals to the Convention. It was agreed that the Convention should adjourn until August 8th to enable the Chairman, in conjunction with the Secretariat, to prepare and circulate to members the material necessary to enable the Convention to proceed with its task. The Preliminary Procedure Committee then held its first meeting, and Sir Francis Hopwood was asked to submit to it information with regard to the procedure adopted by the South African Convention. The Committee met again on July 31st, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Crozier, and drafted Standing Orders to regulate the proceedings of the Convention, modelled on the general lines of those of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. After final revision these Standing Orders were circulated to the members of the Convention.

At the next meeting of the Convention, on August 8th, after their adoption, the Chairman, having described the steps taken by the Secretariat to establish an information bureau, referred to the various schemes for the government of Ireland already in existence, and suggested a procedure by which they might at once be sifted, thoroughly examined, and subsequently brought before the Convention for discussion. Finally it

was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Bishop of Raphoe, and unanimously resolved "that a Standing Committee of not more than twenty members (five to form a quorum) be appointed to consult with the Chairman as to the procedure to be adopted by the Convention, and to exercise such powers as may from time to time be delegated to it by the Convention." On the motion of the Archbishop of Armagh, seconded by the Archbishop of Cashel, the same committee which had previously advised on the choice of a Chairman was appointed to advise on the choice of this Standing or Grand Committee—the second name was subsequently adopted. At the third meeting of the Convention, on August 9th, the appointment was recommended and ratified of the following membership of the Grand Committee, upon which the main work of the Convention should subsequently devolve:—R. N. Anderson (Mayor of Derry); H. T. Barrie, M.P.; T. C. Butterfield (Lord Mayor of Cork); the Archbishop of Cashel; J. Devlin, M.P.; the Archbishop of Dublin; Captain Stephen Gwynn, M.P.; T. J. Harbison, J. Johnston (Lord Mayor of Belfast); E. E. Lysaght, Alderman J. McCarron, A. McDowell, Lord MacDonnell, Viscount Midleton, W. M. Murphy, L. O'Neill (Lord Mayor of Dublin); P. J. O'Neill (Chairman, Dublin Co. Council); H. M. Pollock, G. F. Stewart, A. R. Waugh.\* This Grand Committee was empowered from time to time to report what further committees it was necessary to appoint.

The Convention then decided, in order to enter upon its principal task through a preliminary examination of "such proposals for the government of Ireland as have clear merit and some measure

\* Alterations in the membership were made later on. Lord Londonderry, Dr. Irwin, Dr. Kelly, Dr. O'Donnell, Mr. Redmond, Mr. Clancy, Mr. Russell, Mr. Powell, took the place of Messrs. Anderson, Butterfield, Harbison, Johnston, L. O'Neill, P. J. O'Neill, Stewart, and Dr. Harty. Dr. Crozier was co-opted later.



of support in Irish public opinion," that the Secretariat should present such schemes to the Grand Committee in a form suitable for discussion. These were then to be circulated among the members together with all documents, historical, statistical, and constitutional, needed to assist them in the debate in full Convention. As this procedure involved much detailed work it was necessary to adjourn the Convention until August 21st. Before the adjournment it was decided to accept an invitation from the Lord Mayor of Belfast that the Convention should visit Belfast, and it was agreed that the first series of meetings in September should be held in that city. A similar invitation from Cork was also cordially accepted. The Grand Committee then proceeded forthwith to make arrangements for the preparation and examination of draft schemes which might be made applicable to the future government of Ireland, and decided upon the discussion of "schemes of the Dominion type" at the next meeting of the Convention. At this meeting, on August 21st, and those on August 22nd and 23rd, the Convention entered upon and continued "the consideration of certain draft schemes based upon the Dominion principle of self-government."

These meetings were felt to mark a fresh and important phase of the deliberations. Nothing further occurred, however, to stimulate public interest. It had now become the regular procedure for the Convention to meet on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of every week. It met accordingly on August 28th, 29th, and 30th in Dublin, and on September 4th, 5th and 6th in the City Hall, Belfast, and every meeting was followed by the publication of the same formula. The members of the Convention were hospitably received in Belfast, where, in the course of a public speech, Sir Horace Plunkett said that already it was

abundantly clear that every member had come to the Convention with the earnest desire of developing not Irish differences, but Irish agreements, and he thought that already some of them felt very hopeful of their task. The only jarring note during their visit to Belfast was struck by the *Northern Whig*, which descanted on the futility of discussing schemes of self-government which were destined to be committed to the waste-paper basket. Some significance was attached to this demonstration, in view of the fact that the *Northern Whig* was understood to be closely in touch with a certain section of the Ulster Unionist Council. The Convention then returned to Dublin, and at its next two meetings, on September 11th and 12th, issued the same formula.

At the meeting on September 13th, however, the formula was varied. It was announced that "further schemes, in addition to those previously under discussion, were introduced and considered"—an announcement which gave rise to the impression that no basis of settlement could be reached "upon the Dominion principle of self-government." The sittings of September 18th, 19th and 20th produced no more than the formula that "the discussion on proposals for the future government of Ireland was continued." The first sitting in Cork, at the Crawford Technical Institute, on September 25th, was marked by a notable speech at a public luncheon by the Chairman, who sounded a note, in his own phrase, of "justifiable optimism," and announced that an important stage of the deliberations had been passed and the Convention was moving on to the next. At this sitting a motion was adopted that on the conclusion of the debate at the present sitting of the Convention—on September 26th and 27th—"the various schemes which have been submitted to, and discussed in, the Convention, be

referred to the Grand Committee, in order, if profitable, to prepare a scheme for submission to the Convention, which would meet the views and difficulties expressed by the different speakers during the debate." On September 27th, therefore, the Convention stood adjourned until the Grand Committee should be in a position to report.

During a period of nearly three months the Grand Committee met from time to time, issuing no reports beyond the fact of its meetings, and the appointment of some sub-committees, of which the most important was that established to consider the completion of Land Purchase. It was not until December 18th that the full Convention was summoned to receive a statement of the work done by the Grand Committee. The Convention continued the debate on the statement during the two following days, and then adjourned over Christmas until January 2nd. It was by now apparent that it had reached a crisis in its affairs.

During the Christmas adjournment Sir Horace Plunkett made a brief reference to the Convention in his speech on December 21st at the annual meeting of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. "We are making progress," he said. "We have agreed on many things. There are some things on which we have not agreed. I cannot tell you yet that we will be able to present a unanimous report; but I can tell you that, at the end of our deliberations, we shall leave the Irish question better than we found it, because we shall have agreed on many things, and those who have to complete the task which we may have left unfinished will find that they have a much simpler work to do than we had." After mentioning that the work done by the sub-committee on Land Purchase was very likely to produce a solution that the country would approve, Sir Horace Plunkett added:—"It is perfectly true that we have been



often on the rocks, and probably shall be on the rocks again; but there are always tugs lying by ready to pull us off. We will get off somehow, and I myself am very hopeful of the ultimate result."

The meetings of the Convention in January, after the Christmas adjournment, however, provided no immediate justification of the Chairman's optimism. The meeting on January 2nd was preceded by meetings of the Irish Peers and of the Irish Unionist Alliance. It was now known that Viscount Midleton, on behalf of the Southern Unionists, had proposed the adoption of a compromise which fell far short of Dominion self-government. While securing large concessions to the Unionist minority, it contemplated the reservation of control over Customs, as well as complete naval and military control, to the Imperial Parliament, in which a reduced Irish membership was to be retained. During the first group of meetings after the Christmas recess—January 2nd, 3rd and 4th—the *Irish Independent*—Mr. W. M. Murphy's newspaper—published a strongly worded protest against any settlement which did not give the Irish Parliament complete control over Customs and Excise. "We assert," it said, "that any scheme of Home Rule which does not concede full fiscal powers will not for one moment be entertained by the country. It will be rejected and scouted with derision." The meetings of the Convention on January 8th, 9th and 10th, it was common knowledge, had resulted in absolute deadlock, and those on the 15th, 16th and 17th provided no solution of it. The position, it was understood, was that the Nationalists were not prepared to reduce the claim to Dominion powers and agree to the Midleton compromise while the Ulster Unionists had not defined their attitude, and while there was no assurance that in the event of their finally refusing to agree to that compromise, the Government

would enforce it if it were embodied in a majority report.\*

This public impression of the situation which had developed was confirmed when, immediately before the next meeting of the Convention on January 22nd, it was announced that Mr. Lysaght, one of the nominated members, had addressed a letter to the Prime Minister resigning his position. Mr Lysaght, as has been mentioned, represented the extreme left wing of the Nationalists on the Convention. In a letter to the Press explaining his resignation he wrote that the Irish people as a whole could be expected to agree to no settlement "which does not provide for an Irish Parliament with complete powers over all Irish affairs, and free from outside interference of any kind. Such a Parliament must be democratically elected, and minority safeguards must not prevent it from expressing the will of the Irish people as a whole. The provisions of the Constitution should include:—(1) Fiscal autonomy—*i.e.*, complete control of all taxation, including Customs and Excise. (2) Control of trade policy, with powers similar to those enjoyed by the Dominions of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand in respect of making commercial treaties. (3) Power to raise and control forces for home defence, and powers similar to those enjoyed by the above Dominions as regards naval forces. (4) No representation at Westminster." Mr. Lysaght went on to say that he believed it so desirable to avoid the coercion of any body of Irishmen that he had been, and remained, ready to agree to concessions on the following lines in order to induce Irish Unionists to co-operate in self-govern-

\* Mr. Redmond and some of his followers adhered to the Midleton compromise, but were opposed not only by the Independent Nationalists, but also by Mr. Devlin and the Northern Bishops. The advocates of the Dominion scheme had hoped to receive the support of the Belfast Labour delegates, but these refused to go beyond the Midleton compromise.

ment:—(1) Special arrangements for a limited period, say ten years, by which minority interests would be represented out of proportion to their numbers. (2) By Constitutional safeguards to ensure religious equality. (3) The reservation, for a period, of the control of naval and military forces to the Imperial Parliament, provided that the Irish Parliament had power to raise and control Volunteer forces for service in Ireland only, and that conscription could not be imposed on Ireland without the consent of the Irish Parliament. (4) The recognition of the principle of an Imperial contribution by the assumption of the responsibility for the full cost of home defence, and the completion of Land Purchase by the Irish Parliament. (The general principle which Mr. Lysaght defined in this connection was that of “no doles from England and no tribute from Ireland.”) (5) A Free Trade Treaty between Ireland and Great Britain, attached to the Constitution, and binding both countries for a term of years, always provided that Irish control of trade in all other matters was not impaired.

“The object of the Convention,” Mr. Lysaght proceeded, “was to find some such means to induce Irish Unionists, and especially Ulster Unionists, to agree voluntarily to a Constitution which would be acceptable to the majority of the Irish people. Without the prospect of such agreement and without an immediate assurance from the Government, that a majority report, however constituted, will be acted on without delay, continued discussions in the Convention seem to me to be useless. If Mr. Lloyd George’s speech of January 5th, in which he outlined British war-aims, means anything, it certainly commits the British Government to the principle of self-determination, and the right of Ireland to determine her form of government can no longer be disputed. There is, I



believe, grave danger of Ireland's case being grossly misrepresented in the eyes of the world, who may be led to believe that the setting up of an unrepresentative Convention of Irishmen (hampered by the pledge which Ulster Unionists have from the Government) is a fair and proper application of the principle of self-determination to Ireland. Every country to which the principle of self-determination is to be applied has within its borders a minority opposed to its national freedom. Is Ireland alone to be dominated by that minority, which, it must be remembered, has been offered in Ireland concessions and safeguards unprecedented in any democratic country in the world? There is even greater danger, in my judgment, of its continued existence in protracted silence, being utilised to postpone the question of Ireland's future status, which is now a question of international importance. The time has surely come for the Government to prove to the Irish people that the fullest self-government is not only possible, but certain, for nationalities within the bounds of the British Empire; otherwise they need not be surprised if an increasing number of Irishmen refuse to accept anything short of complete separation."

Mr. Lysaght's resignation from the Irish Convention was immediately followed by that of Sir Edward Carson from the War Cabinet. His letter of resignation to the Prime Minister explained his reasons for this step. After recalling that he had used his influence to induce his friends in Ulster to take part in the Convention, but had himself been debarred from taking part in its proceedings by his dual position as a member of the Government and as leader of the Ulster Party, Sir Edward Carson said that "it is apparent that, whatever the result of the Convention may be, its proceedings may lead to a situation demanding a decision by the Government on grave matters of policy in Ireland."

He felt certain that it would be of advantage to the War Cabinet to discuss this policy without his presence, "having regard to the very prominent part which I have taken in the past in relation to the Home Rule controversy and the pledges by which I am bound to my friends in Ulster." He added that he desired to be entirely unfettered himself in forming a judgment as to the new situation which might arise, "taking account both of the supreme duty which rests on all of us of assisting in the prosecution of the war, and of my personal obligations as leader of the Ulster Unionist Party."

Mr. Lloyd George, in accepting his resignation with regret, expressed his assurance that Sir Edward Carson was resigning "in no partisan spirit, for ever since the war began you have placed victory for your country above all sectional prejudice or advantage." Public speculation in Ireland as to the use which Sir Edward Carson would make of his liberty of action was not immediately gratified. In his series of speeches during his visit to Ulster after his resignation he baffled curiosity by laying carefully equal stress on the importance of an Irish settlement and on the security of the Government's pledge that there should be no coercion of Unionist Ulster. He was clearly adopting a waiting attitude until the Government had defined its policy.

Sir Edward Carson's resignation was at once interpreted as meaning that the Government had decided upon some sort of intervention in the affairs of the Convention. This expectation was quickly realised. The Convention had resumed its sittings on January 22nd, the date when Sir Edward Carson's resignation was announced. On the morrow *The Times* published a remarkable dispatch from its Washington correspondent. The correspondent asserted that disquieting reports reaching America of the prospects of the Irish

Convention had created a profound uneasiness, which was causing great anxiety in official circles. "America," he said, "regards the question as one in which the whole civilised world is most deeply interested. Although there is no desire on the part either of President Wilson or the American people to interfere in the slightest degree with the manner of solution, the principles at stake are so vital that the most disastrous consequences would inevitably follow the collapse of the Irish Convention and the failure of the British Government to apply to Ireland principles which both Mr. Lloyd George and President Wilson have declared essential to the future happiness of mankind. Among the mass of the American people, it is true, there has been a widespread feeling that the Irish Convention was hand-picked, but the general belief is that whatever the majority decides will be ratified by the Irish people. Should these hopes be dashed, no power on earth can prevent an immediate outburst of feeling here, which will not only very greatly hamper President Wilson, but will have a direct effect upon America's participation in the war. The splendid result of Mr. Balfour's visit to the United States would be wiped out overnight, and distrust of Great Britain would take the place of the confidence now happily existing. There are at present several resolutions bearing upon the Irish question dormant in Congress, and political conditions in the United States make it certain that action will be taken by Congress should the Convention collapse and the British Government fail to meet the resulting situation. . . . Even in official circles a strong feeling exists that, in the event of a collapse of the Irish Convention, the British Government must be prepared to accept the decisions of the majority, and to enforce them upon the minority. This is based on the belief that the majority of the Irish people have been obliged :



in the past to live under a system of government not desired by the majority, and acceptable only to the minority of the inhabitants, and that now the least the British Government can do is to give Ireland, as a whole, the kind of government desired by the majority, even though it may be repugnant to the minority, as they realise that absolute political unanimity is impossible. Americans can no more conceive of Ulster being allowed to separate herself from the rest of Ireland than they could conceive of allowing South Carolina to secede from the Union. To admit it is to admit the right of Ireland to secede as a whole from the British Empire."

The validity of this interpretation of the American attitude was fiercely disputed by Ulster Unionists. President Wilson's undoubted anxiety for an Irish settlement, however, must be presumed to have been not the least of the influences which decided the Government to intervene in the Convention deadlock. On January 24th, the day after the publication of *The Times's* Washington dispatch, Sir Horace Plunkett read to the Convention a letter from the Prime Minister stating that "before a decision was come to by the Convention on certain issues under discussion," he and his colleagues in the Cabinet would be happy to confer with leading members representing different sections of the Convention, should they desire to follow such a course. It was therefore decided to adjourn the Convention, and certain members were selected to meet the Prime Minister and his colleagues. The Chairman was authorised to arrange the conference for the earliest possible date, and immediately thereafter to summon the Convention. Owing to the Prime Minister's engagements he did not meet the Convention representatives until the second week in February, when he began to confer with the delegates of the

various parties separately. Sir Edward Carson, who had returned to London, was at the same time in touch with Mr. Lloyd George.

In the period between the adjournment of the Convention and the meetings in London three suggestive things occurred. In the first place, Mr. Devlin interpreted the Parliamentary Party's victory in South Armagh in these terms :—" I take the verdict of South Armagh to represent the feelings of Nationalist Ulster in relation to the present political situation in Ireland. If that verdict means anything, it means that there must be conceded to this country a measure of the widest form of self-government. South Armagh demands such a measure of liberty for Ireland as is enjoyed by Canada, Australia and South Africa. If the Government is not prepared to hearken to the voice of the rational-minded people of Ireland as reflected in the decisive result of this election, then it must be prepared to see this country handed over to the forces of extremism and disruption. I go so far as to say that the message of the electors of South Armagh embodies a dual lesson. It conveys a message of good-will to the Convention, on the one hand, and a warning, on the other hand, that the question of Irish self-government must be settled at once on the broadest and most generous lines." Following this speech of Mr. Devlin's the Nationalist Press, official as well as independent, urged the demand for Dominion self-government. In the next place, Mr. George Russell ("Æ"), known to be one of the foremost advocates of that solution, who had been selected as one of the delegates to the London Conference, followed Mr. Lysaght's example and resigned from the Convention on the eve of the delegates' departure. Finally, there was to be observed a certain tentative canvassing in a section of the London Press of the possibility of reviving the completely discredited scheme of partition.

During the suspension of the Convention's sittings, while the delegation from it was absent in London, the situation in Ireland was not wanting in elements of interest and even of excitement. On February 14th, in a letter to the *Freeman's Journal*, Mr. Dillon made a tentative overture to *Sinn Fein*, hinting at a possibility of common action in the event of an abortive issue to the Convention. In the course of his letter he asserted his belief that an Irish Republic would not be practical politics within the life-time of himself or Mr. de Valera. At the same time he declared that "I am and always have been of opinion that, if the Irish question is not satisfactorily settled before the conclusion of the war, an effort ought to be made, and must be made, to get a hearing for the Irish question at the Peace Conference." Apart from the demand for an independent Republic, which he said was becoming more and more a purely academic question, Mr. Dillon suggested that the only difference between the Nationalist Party and *Sinn Fein* was that the former "consider it far preferable, if possible, that a settlement by agreement with the British people should be made now or before the conclusion of the war, rather than that we should be forced to appeal to the Peace Conference." Without developing the hint of a possible scheme of co-operation, Mr. Dillon went on to propose a truce. He asked was it necessary for the purposes of the *Sinn Fein* movement that each by-election should be made a battlefield, "to the manifest weakening of every movement having for its object the winning of Irish freedom." He proposed that *Sinn Fein* should carry on without fighting by-elections, and that when the General Election came, if the Irish question was still unsettled, and it was still of the same mind, it should then challenge once for all the verdict of the new electors and let Ireland decide who was to speak in



her name. In the anticipated event of this proposal being rejected by *Sinn Fein*, he suggested at least an agreement whereby neither party should bring into a contested constituency more than a limited number of outsiders, confined to speakers and election agents, so as to leave the people of the constituency free from outside pressure to record their verdict, and "mitigate the scandals which have marked recent elections." Finally, Mr. Dillon addressed this further question to Mr. de Valera: "Does he, or does he not, approve of the Mansion House meeting held last week in Dublin? Does he agree with the speaker at that meeting who declared that, in his judgment, the liberty won by the Bolsheviks in Russia is the only complete liberty ever enjoyed by any people in history, and that it is the kind of liberty that the Irish people are determined to have and are prepared to fight for?"

To these questions Mr. de Valera returned no immediate reply. The last of the questions addressed to him by Mr. Dillon referred to a crowded meeting in the Dublin Mansion House which was addressed by some Russian Bolsheviks, who were given an enthusiastic reception by the Irish Labour Party and the labour wing of *Sinn Fein*. The policy of the Bolsheviks had at this time brought them into extreme disfavour with the *bourgeois* parties of Ireland as of every other country. This meeting was rigidly boycotted by orthodox members of the *Sinn Fein* party. It was chiefly remarkable as illustrating the hold which the extreme doctrines of the "class-war" had established over the imagination of the working classes of the Irish towns. The theory of James Connolly and the Bolshevik theory had, of course, much in common. The *bourgeois* Press, Nationalist as well as Unionist, however, lost no opportunity of seeking to implicate *Sinn Fein* in

"Bolshevism"—a term which it applied to the development in the month of February of manifestations of "anarchy," though these were confined to rural districts, while "Bolshevism," in any serious meaning of the word, was wholly applicable to the towns.

The unrest which rapidly developed in this month centred in Clare, a county always peculiarly subject to agrarian disturbance, and spread thence to the adjacent counties. Extensive and frequent raiding for arms was followed by the organisation of cattle-drives, and the seizure of land for tillage on a large scale. These drives and seizures were carried out under the auspices of the local *Sinn Fein* clubs "in the name of the Irish Republic," and in defiance of the police, who were compelled to adopt the rôle of impotent spectators in the majority of cases. In some, however, collisions occurred between the people and the police. The successful challenge of the political and agrarian movement to authority began inevitably to encourage ordinary crime in the form of the satisfaction of private vendettas, and, in one or two cases, of serious highway robberies. The Standing Committee of *Sinn Fein* addressed a circular to the local executives in which it said that, while most of the cattle-drives were no doubt justifiable, some of them appeared to be unjust and undertaken without due regard to the circumstances, and appealed for discretion in these and other matters lest the cause of the Irish Republic should be brought into disrepute.

A correspondent of the *New York World*, after spending ten days in the West of Ireland, thus described the situation: "The meaning of the news is not that the rural districts of the West are seething with violent crime. Comparatively little of what is happening could fairly be brought within that term. What has happened is that the popula-

tion of County Clare and of wide areas of the adjacent counties have simply ceased to recognise the law. There is no longer even a pretence of general respect for authority. All Government regulations are openly flouted. The police are mocked at and the magistrates ridiculed with impunity. . . . In all this there seems to be little bitterness or hatred, but much contempt—the contempt of an acute, witty and vain people for what they choose to regard as the dull blundering of a set of stupid outsiders. . . . In this scornful fashion Western Ireland is drifting to the rapids of anarchy. While the Government thus finds itself in a state of dissolution, the background of all Irish minds that are able to view events clearly is shadowed by the spectre of an ultimate ‘settlement’ under Martial Law in the West.”

Manifestations of this movement were not confined to the West. In County Dublin, for example, an aerodrome was raided at night by a masked band of cyclist, who carried away plans and instruments. A number of young men were arrested in Dublin on charges of conspiring to blow up railway bridges. On February 22nd the Dublin Press announced that “Bolshevism has invaded Dublin.” On the previous afternoon a drove of pigs on their way through the streets to the port for export had been stopped, seized and slaughtered to the number of thirty-four. The *Sinn Féin* Food Committee, which by this time had extended its organisation into almost every parish in Ireland, announced that it took full responsibility for this action, and that no more Irish swine must cross the Channel until the Irish bacon factories had enough supplies to meet the needs of the Irish people. This affair of the pigs—“thirty-four good friends of England butchered in the streets of Dublin,” as the *Morning Post* put it with mordant humour—apparently moved the Chief Secretary to action.



Mr. Duke hurriedly cancelled his engagements in London and crossed to Dublin on February 23rd. It was at once evident that the Executive had decided upon a new policy. Its first step was to attempt to defeat the "hunger-strike." In recent weeks persons convicted for political offences had resorted in ever-increasing numbers to this device—an example which ordinary prisoners tended to follow—and the Executive, doubtless with a vivid memory of the storm which followed the death of Ashe, had permitted the device to become an almost infallible means of jail delivery. Mr. Duke, in a letter to the Lord Mayor of Cork, now announced that "under the circumstances now existing, physical disability, due to wilful and systematic refusal of food, ought not to be regarded as ground for discharge." At the same time the aid of Catholic doctrine on the subject of self-extinction was invoked in support of the civil law. In a public letter dealing with cattle-driving, the Chief Secretary wrote that he was "not surprised that at this period, when, as I believe, there is sound reason to anticipate fruitful results from the labours of the Irish Convention, there should be renewed and systematic endeavours to disturb and alarm the people of Ireland. The object of such transactions is too obvious for any disguise."

Mr. Dillon, however, in his speeches saw in the recent attitude of the Executive once more the working of the "hidden hand." As the last of a series of sinister symptoms he instanced the appointment as Chief of the Imperial General Staff of Sir Henry Wilson, "one of the chief military advisers of Sir Edward Carson in getting up the Ulster rebellion." Mr. Dillon suggested that the country was being deliberately allowed, or even invited, to drift into anarchy in order to justify a policy of coming forward and saying, "the country is not fit for Home Rule, and the first thing

to do is to restore order." On February 27th a *Communiqué* was issued by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief in Ireland announcing that "the outbreak of lawlessness which has occurred in County Clare rendered it necessary on Sunday (February 24th) to send additional troops into the county to assist the police." The county was declared a special military area under the Defence of the Realm Regulations, and powers were thereby conferred on a military commandant to be "enforced so long as is necessary for the restoration of order." The County of Clare was thenceforward administered by Brigadier-General Burnett under a severe *régime* of Martial Law.

These were the circumstances in which the Convention reassembled in Dublin on February 26th.\* The visit of its delegation to London appeared to have produced no very solid results. It was unfortunate in its occasion, for Mr. Lloyd George had been immersed in the Versailles Council and in the "crisis" which followed over the dismissal of Sir William Robertson, and had little opportunity to give the tangled affairs of the Convention the study which they required. The delegates brought back to Dublin little beyond an impression of the capital importance which the Cabinet attached to an Irish settlement. At the first of the resumed meetings of the Convention the Chairman, who had stayed in London after the rest of the delegates, presented to the Convention a report on the results of the delegation to the Cabinet. The report indicated the Government's intention, in the event of the Convention's failure to agree, to resume responsibility for affecting a settlement; the Government's ideas corresponding closely with those of Lord Midleton. The Government, however, had not committed itself to any

\* Sir Henry Blake, one of the Southern Unionist delegates, had died during the adjournment.

abrogation of the standing pledge to Unionist Ulster against coercion. An attempt was made, but defeated, to adjourn the sittings of the Convention as a protest against the state of Ireland. On February 27th the official *communiqué* contained only the statement that discussion on the report on the delegation to London was continued. On the following day it was announced that, on receiving a report from the Grand Committee, the Convention had appointed a sub-committee to consider the question of housing in urban areas, and that the Convention was adjourned until the following week to enable the sub-committee to hold its first meeting. The appointment of such a committee at this late stage of the Convention's business was regarded with some suspicion by a large part of the Irish public. A saying attributed to Sir F. E. Smith in an American interview was recalled in this connection—that the best thing for Ireland was that the Convention should “keep on talking.”



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE REPORT AND AFTER.

THE Convention had scarcely resumed its sittings on March 6th when they were interrupted by the death on the same day of Mr. John Redmond, who for some little time had been prevented by ill-health from attending. At its meeting on the following day the Convention passed a resolution placing on record "our deep sense of sorrow at the unexpected death of Mr. John Redmond, our faithful and devoted colleague." Mr. Redmond, the resolution declared, "was valued by all as a great Irishman, a brilliant Parliamentarian, an honourable opponent, a kindly friend, a genial and warm-hearted comrade. Throughout the proceedings of the Convention his wise counsel was an invaluable aid for our guidance. He looked upon the work of the Convention and its outcome as fraught with the most vital interests for the Irish people and the whole Empire." Then out of respect for the memory of the parliamentary leader the Convention adjourned until after the funeral, which took place at Wexford on the following Saturday. Shortly afterwards occurred the death of Sir A. McDowell, the ablest of the Ulstermen, whom, unfortunately, illness had prevented from attending many of the sittings at Trinity College. The influence of Mr. Redmond had at one moment nearly secured agreement between the bulk of the Nationalists and the Southern Unionist and non-party delegates. If that influence was overborne while he remained leader of the Nationalist Party and a member of the Convention, it seemed unlikely that such a compromise of conflicting interests should be again afforded now that he was removed by death, and the leadership of the Parliamentary

Party had passed to Mr. Dillon, who had declined membership in the Convention.

Moreover, a more unaccommodating temper had begun to disclose itself on the other side. On March 4th a body of twenty-two Southern Unionists had issued a "Call to Unionists," in which they chose this moment for reaffirming their "conviction that in the maintenance of the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland, and in the firm, just, and impartial administration of the law, lies the only hope for the future of our country and the security of His Majesty's Dominions." The authors of this document proceeded to set up a Southern Unionist Committee and to enrol supporters. They disputed the validity of the claim of Lord Midleton and the other representatives of the Irish Unionist Alliance to speak in the name of Southern Unionists in their attitude in the Convention. The Committee's own policy for the solution of the Irish question was, in effect, conscription, tempered by the completion of land purchase. It refused to contemplate any departure from the Union beyond a devolution to Ireland of such local affairs as might equally be devolved upon other parts of the United Kingdom in a federal system.

The support which the Committee attracted was not so great that the formation of this Southern Unionist "cave" need be regarded as seriously compromising the Midleton policy if that policy had still promised to secure any approach to "substantial agreement" in the Convention. But in the existing circumstances it tended to weaken the position of the Southern Unionist delegates; still more, it tended inevitably, as it was perhaps chiefly intended, to confirm the Ulster Unionist delegates in their uncompromising attitude—if that were needed. An inconclusive result of the Convention was now certain. It reassembled on March 12th,

and this week sat for four instead of three days, announcing that discussion on the Chairman's statement on the results of the delegation to the Cabinet, and on the statement received from the Grand Committee, was being continued during these sittings. This formula was understood to cover the preparation of the Convention's Report, which was expected to be largely of a historical character: its conclusions, as a newspaper gossipier said, "were expected to be a guide rather than a mandate to the Government." Pending its appearance public attention was directed to the declaration of policy by Mr. Dillon, and to the two by-elections which were in progress in Waterford and East Tyrone in consequence of Captain Redmond's resignation of the latter seat to contest his father's old constituency against *Sinn Féin*.

Mr. Dillon went to Enniskillen, where he played what his enemies called "the old tune." He taunted the *Sinn Féiners* with being divided in their counsels and vague in their aspirations, but did not disclose his own policy. He said that the Party could not decide upon its line of action until the Convention had issued its report. The Convention—here Mr. Dillon found himself in agreement with *Sinn Féin*—should not be regarded as a genuine instrument of self-determination; and if it failed to lead to Home Rule, Mr. Dillon promised to denounce England for being false to her profession in favour of small nations. Nevertheless the experiment of the Convention had been worth while making; the Party was justified in approving it; and, whatever might eventuate, Mr. Dillon (it was evident) would not associate himself with the Republican demand, or with threats of physical force, or with the policy of abstention from Westminster.

\* This, of course, was before the Government's declaration of its intention to extend conscription to Ireland.



When this speech was being made it was already evident that the contest in Waterford would end in favour of the Irish Party's candidate. On Saturday, March 23rd, the figures were announced. They were: Captain Redmond, 1,242; Dr. V. White, 764.\* Comment was largely silenced owing to the critical character which the war in France had suddenly assumed. The *Sinn Feiners* attributed their defeat, first, to the Unionist vote and, secondly, to the "family" feeling in favour of the Irish Party candidate. "Captain Redmond's election," wrote *The Independent*, "caused no surprise. . . . It does not prove that the Nationalists are winning all along the line. Even two swallows do not make a summer. These results merely prove that the Party at present has succeeded in retaining some of its seats, though in the event of a general election the Party would lose considerably more than half its seats, and the result of recent contests in no way modifies this view." An English newspaper pointed out that Captain Redmond had conducted his campaign in khaki, and that the Union Jack was his emblem; while *Sinn Fein* headquarters in Dublin announced the result as "Another British Victory." After all allowances had been made Waterford must have induced a serious reflection among the *Sinn Feiners*. It was all very well for them to jeer at a Unionist and Redmondite collaboration under the Union Jack. The very fact that Unionists and Redmondites had collaborated under the Union Jack constituted an important criticism of what was the chief claim of *Sinn Fein*—that for the international status of the Irish question.

On the same Saturday an important Note was issued from the Convention. The public was

\* The East Tyrone seat was also held by the Nationalists by a substantial majority.

informed that "decisions had been arrived at on all material points," and that the Chairman had been instructed to draw up a draft report which would be presented to the Convention after the Easter holidays. Subsequently Lord Midleton, the leader of the Southern Unionists at the Convention, conferred in Dublin with the Executive of the Irish Unionist Alliance (the political organisation of the Southern Unionists); no report of the proceedings was issued to the Press, but it was stated unofficially that the Alliance had been informed of the course of events in Trinity College up to date, and that there had been expressions both of approval and disapproval. The comment of the Press became more optimistic, though it was noted that nothing had been said in the Note as to the unanimity of the "decisions" arrived at. It was also current that the Report of the Convention would be largely recapitulatory and that the onus of real decisions would be left to the Government.

Public opinion had, however, been still further diverted from the Convention by a revival of what was called the "Conscription menace." In view of events in France the War Cabinet had decided on the necessity of an increase in British man-power. The Tory organs, the *Morning Post* and *Globe*, seized the opportunity to raise anew the question of the total exemption of Ireland from the Military Service Acts. The *Morning Post* and the *Globe* had always been urgent for Irish Conscription. But now for the first time the Harmsworth Press, both *Times* and *Daily Mail*, associated themselves, albeit cautiously, with the same demand. It was argued that the British public, called upon for further sacrifices, would no longer bear with the state of affairs which prevailed in Ireland. On April 1 the *Freeman's Journal* hinted that a big struggle was going on in the Cabinet, and represented that both from the military and

the political point of view differences of opinion on the question of Irish conscription existed. Mr. Duke, according to the rumour, intended to resign in the event of the adoption of the Irish proposals of the War Office. It was also believed that for one reason or another the Irish Unionists as a whole shared the cautious view of Mr. Duke. Certainly the attitude of the Irish Parliamentary Party was not in doubt, and Mr. Devlin renewed his pledges of opposition in the course of an electioneering speech in Tyrone.

The suggestion came forward inevitably that conscription should be introduced in Ireland as a result of a "deal" between the Home Rulers and the Government. Thus, if the Convention should come to a decision in favour of Home Rule the Government would undertake legislation as soon as the principle of Irish conscription had been asserted. Mr. Garvin in the *Observer* proposed that application of the measure should be left to "statesmanship" in the immediate future. The difficulties of mixing up the matter of political settlement—if there was a sincere desire for political settlement—with a proposal of conscription were obvious. Mr. Lloyd George in pledging the Government to legislate in accordance with the recommendations of the Convention had made no condition save that of substantial agreement among Irishmen themselves. No sort of suggestion of a deal with Great Britain on the basis of conscription had been raised. From the point of view of the *Freeman's Journal* or the Party, however, the aim of the agitators for conscription was not so much that of securing soldiers from Ireland as that of ruining the prospects of settlement. The Liberal Press, the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily News* and the *Manchester Guardian*, put forward counsels of moderation. "The suggestion," said the *Daily Chronicle*, "that it would be a wise and



bold thing for the Government to extend conscription to Ireland shows a lamentable ignorance of the facts. Such a policy would aggravate the Irish problem and bring no appreciable help to the army."

On Saturday, April 6, the Press unanimously announced that the Cabinet had come to a decision of bringing Ireland within the scope of the new Man Power Bill. According to the best informed journals the principle of Irish conscription was to be asserted. At the same time the Report of the Convention came into the Government's hands; it was laid upon the Table of the House of Commons on April 9th. The Press of that morning stated that the Government were of opinion that the Report sufficiently satisfied the condition of substantial agreement to justify it in presenting immediately to Parliament a "Bill for a Final Settlement of the Irish Question." The supporters of the Government denied that either plan was conditional upon the other; a coincidence had occurred, a fortunate coincidence, and nothing more. In Ireland, however, even among Unionists, the value of the coincidence was disputed; the *Irish Times* declared that Ireland's "obligation to herself and humanity" should have no sort of connection with her form of government, and the same newspaper suggested that in his "earnest desire for a settlement"—for a coincidence of events—the Premier had read into the report more than it contained. The Dublin Corporation called a meeting and warned the Government against "the disastrous effect" of the "insane proposal" of conscription. One of the Redmondite members of the Council stated that Nationalist Ireland would not accept the proposal even if it were the outcome of the most satisfactory political settlement; and he moved an addendum to the resolution asking the Lord Mayor to invite Messrs. Dillon, De Valera,

Devlin, A. Griffith, and representatives of the Trades Union Congress to meet him in conference for a united opposition to conscription, and to consider the establishment of an All-Ireland Covenant. As regards the actual nature of the Convention Report it was now known for certain that it amounted merely to a record of proceedings in chronological order, of proposals made, decisions taken, of voting, and of a statement of the views of the various bodies into which the Convention had divided.

On April 9th, when the Premier introduced his Man Power proposals to the House of Commons the prophets who had foretold that conscription would be contingent on Home Rule, or *vice versa*, proved to have been in error. He said that the remarkable Convention which had just been held in Ireland furnished the Government with another opportunity (here Mr. Byrne interjected, "Of breaking its word") of approaching the vexed question of Irish autonomy with more hope of success. "But," he added, "there must be no misapprehension. The questions (of conscription and Home Rule) do not stand together. Each must be taken on its merits." The Premier justified compulsion in Ireland by quoting from speeches of Mr. Redmond and Mr. Dillon in support of the war. Had not Mr. Redmond said in 1916 that he opposed conscription on the grounds of expediency not of principle? Had not Mr. Dillon said that that he would not hesitate to support conscription to-morrow if he thought it necessary to maintain liberty? Mr. Dillon took up the challenge in his replies. If Irish liberties were at stake (he said) he would still not hesitate to support Conscription. The inexpediency of the measure even from the Allied standpoint still held good; for "you take a decision which will plunge Ireland into bloodshed and open up a new war front." He might

have quoted from the significant statement of the Irish Roman Catholic Bishops which had been published on that very day in the Dublin Press :—  
“What between mismanagement and mischief making this country has already been deplorably upset, and it would be a fatal mistake, surpassing the worst blunders of the past, to furnish a telling plea now for desperate courses by the attempt to enforce Conscription.” The Irish Parliamentary leader also attacked the Premier’s proposal from the ground of principle, and he asked what justice there could be in the Government’s taking its decision without the consultation of one single Irish representative.

All turned theoretically on the question of *status*, and the Premier scored by pointing out (as *Sinn Feiners* had often done) that the Parliamentary Party by accepting the Home Rule Act of 1914 had acquiesced in the Imperial right to compel Irishmen to military service. On the other hand, in 1917, by the establishment of the Irish Convention—if the Convention were not a farce—the Government had admitted an Irish right of self-determination. Mr. Lloyd George’s references to the Convention in his speech of April 9th, were, to put it mildly, unfortunate. It transpired that he had not yet had time to read the Report. But, apparently, he had gathered vaguely that there had not been complete unanimity at the Convention. “I understand that it reported by a majority. I fear the majority is not such as to justify the Government in saying that it represents substantial agreement. . . .” Therefore the Government would take the responsibility of submitting to Parliament such proposals for the establishment of self-government in Ireland as they thought “just.” By these words, in effect, the Premier threw over the whole case for the Convention, that body having been set up in 1917 for



the alleged reason that the Government could not say in what "justice" to Ireland consisted, and had determined to leave the matter to Irishmen themselves. Mr. Devlin disclosed the fact (of which the Premier professed ignorance) that a sub-committee of the Convention had reported on the application of conscription to Ireland, and declared it to be, assuming the establishment of an Irish Parliament, "impossible" without the consent and co-operation of that Parliament.

While the Man Power Bill was being hurried through the House of Commons amid protests from Ireland—protests that the Dublin Correspondent of *The Times* described as the most violent within the memory of man—the Blue Book containing the Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention was issued to the public. It contained Sir H. Plunkett's Report of the Proceedings, a Report of the Ulster Unionist delegates, a Note by the Provost and the Archbishop of Armagh, a Report by twenty-two Nationalist members of the Convention, a Note by the majority of the Labour representatives, a Note by the Earl of Dunraven, and a Note by the Southern Unionists.\* It was found that all the Southern Unionists, a majority of Nationalists, and five out of the seven Labour representatives were agreed that the scheme of Irish self-government set out in paragraph 42 of the Report of the Proceedings should be immediately passed into law. Paragraph 42 provided for an Irish Parliament (King, Senate and Commons), and at the same time, for the maintenance of the supreme power and authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The minority of eighteen

\* This sub-committee consisted of two Irish Peers, a Southern Unionist Delegate, and two Solder Nationalists. The report was unanimous, and was adopted by the Convention by a majority

† Paragraph 42 of the Report of the Proceedings will be found in the Appendix to this Volume, together with the Ulster Report, the Note of the Nationalist Majority and Minority Nationalist Report.

which voted against this provision was composed wholly of Northern Unionists. Certain matters, such as Peace and War, the Coinage, Army and Navy, Harbours for naval and military purposes, were definitely excluded from the powers of the Irish Parliament. The Irish Police and Postal services were to be under unified control during the war, subject to Imperial exigencies, but the administration of these services would after the cessation of hostilities become automatically subject to the Irish Parliament. There were to be certain restrictions on the power of the Irish Parliament on matters within its competence, as in the Home Rule Act of 1914. All-important, however, were the sections in paragraph 42 relating to Finance and the Concessions to Unionists. The Nationalists of both sections proved to have been equally generous to the Irish Unionist and Protestant minority in their offer of safeguards. They were ready to accept the principle that 40 per cent. of the membership of the Irish Commons should be guaranteed to Unionists. They consented that for a period there should be summoned to the Commons 20 members nominated by the Lord Lieutenant, with a view to the due representation of interests not otherwise adequately represented in the provinces of Leinster, Munster and Connaught, and that 20 additional members should be elected by Ulster constituencies, to represent commercial, industrial, and agricultural interests (in the latter suggestion an idea had evidently been borrowed from Mr. George Russell's celebrated pamphlet *Thoughts for a Convention*). The extra-representation of Ulster would not cease except on an adverse decision by a three-fourth's majority of both Houses sitting together. This last sub-section was carried by 26 votes to 20, the delegates of the Ulster Unionist Council abstaining.

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In regard to Finance, on the sub-section postponing the Control of Customs and Excise for further consideration until after the war, and providing that the question of such control should be considered and decided by the United Kingdom Parliament within seven years after the conclusion of peace, the voting was very close—38 to 34. The Ulster delegates voted in the minority together with a large number of leading Nationalists, notably, the Archbishop of Cashel, the Bishop of Down and Connor, Mr. Joseph Devlin and Mr. W. M. Murphy. The delegates of the Irish Party were themselves divided, Mr. Devlin being on one side and Captain Stephen Gwynn on the other. On this issue there had been, according to the Chairman's draft report, three clearly defined bodies of opinion in the Convention; the Ulster Unionists advocating the maintenance of fiscal unity within the United Kingdom; a section of Nationalists insisting on complete fiscal autonomy for Ireland; and the Southern Unionists, with the adherence of a majority of Nationalists and the majority of the labour members, agreeing to a compromise which left to Ireland the proceeds of all sources of revenue and the imposition of all taxes other than Customs.

On February 25, 1918, the Premier, who had been informed of events, communicated to Sir Horace Plunkett a letter which contained, among other suggestions, certain proposals regarding Customs and Excise.\* Mr. Lloyd George opposed the demand for fiscal autonomy; for the transfer of Customs and Excise would be "impossible in the midst of a great war," and might also be "incompatible with the federal reorganisation of the United Kingdom." After that the Convention took up a resolution of Lord MacDonnell which embodied, with variation in detail, some of the suggestions contained in the Premier's letter. But

\* See Appendix.



whereas the Premier had proposed that a Royal Commission should sit after the war and "re-examine" the financial relations of Ireland and England, Lord MacDonnell's motion made it clear that a decision as regards the "imposition of Customs and Excise" should be arrived at by the Imperial Parliament within seven years after the cessation of hostilities. For the purposes of the decision a number of Irish representatives proportioned to the population of Ireland should be called to the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The Nationalists who consented to the compromise explained in a Note that, in their belief, the proposed Parliament would be an effective instrument in obtaining further powers by general consent; that the proposal to pay into an Irish Exchequer the full proceeds of Irish taxation, direct and indirect, subject only to an agreed contribution to Imperial expenditure, would give the Irish Government means for internal development; and that the claim of an Irish Parliament to be the sole taxing authority for Ireland must still hold. The Note was signed by 25 Nationalists and 3 Liberals (Lords Granard and MacDonnell and Sir Bertram Windle). The 22 Nationalists who drew up a Minority Report\* dwelt largely upon the subject. This Report, which had the support of three clerics (Dr. O'Donnell, Dr. Harty and Dr. MacRory), of Mr. Devlin, M.P., of Mr. Lunden, M.P., of Mr. Harbison, M.P., and Mr. W. M. Murphy proposed the recognition of Irish rights over Customs and Excise, but agreed to a suspension of such rights until after the war, to a guarantee for a reasonable period of Free Trade between Ireland and England "in articles which were the produce or manufacture of either country," and to a fixed statutory contribution to Imperial Expenses."

In dealing with the question of Irish representation at Westminster the Nationalists of the

minority stated that they would have preferred that all representation at Westminster should cease for the time being. The report of the proceedings does not indicate that the Nationalist members of the Convention showed at any time a very strong feeling on this point. In a scheme of Colonial Home Rule drawn up by the Bishop of Raphoe during the autumn, for submission to a sub-committee of the Grand Committee, it had been proposed that "representation in the Parliament of the United Kingdom should cease until there was a Federal Parliament." The Unionists, however, both of the North and South, intimated that representation at Westminster was for them a *sine qua non*. On the Nationalist's side it was stated that, while they did not favour the continuance of representation in the Imperial Parliament, they did not look upon its cessation as a *sine qua non*. Doubts were expressed as to whether Irish representatives at Westminster should be directly elected or delegated by the Irish Parliament. In the final voting (paragraph 42) it was decided that forty-two Irish members should be elected to the Imperial Parliament on the panel system.

We may here give the "letter of transmission" of the 8th of April, 1918, in which Sir Horace Plunkett, addressing the British Prime Minister, summed up results:—"I have the honour to transmit herewith the Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention. For the immediate object of the Government the Report tells all that needs to be told: it shows that in the Convention, whilst it was not found possible to overcome the objections of the Ulster Unionists, a majority of Nationalists, all the Southern Unionists, and five out of the seven Labour representatives were agreed that the scheme of Irish self-government set out in paragraph 42 of the Report should be immediately passed into law. A

minority of Nationalists propose a scheme which differs in only one important particular from that of the majority. The Convention has, therefore, laid a foundation of Irish agreement unprecedented in history. I recognise that action in Parliament upon the result of our deliberations must largely depend upon public opinion. Without a knowledge of the circumstances which, at the termination of our proceedings, compelled us to adopt an unusual method of presenting the results of our deliberations, the public might be misled as to what has actually been achieved. It is, therefore, necessary to explain our procedure.

“ We had every reason to believe that the Government contemplated immediate legislation upon the results of our labours. The work of an Irish settlement, suspended at the outbreak of the war, is now felt to admit of no further postponement. In the Dominions and in the United States, as well as in other allied countries, the unsettled Irish Question is a disturbing factor, both in regard to war effort and peace aims. Nevertheless, urgent as our task was, we could not complete it until every possibility of agreement had been explored. The moment this point was reached—and you will not be surprised that it took us eight months to reach it—we decided to issue our Report with the least possible delay. To do this we had to avoid further controversy and protracted debate. I was, therefore, on March 22nd, instructed to draft a Report which should be a mere narrative of the Convention’s proceedings, with a statement, for the information of the Government, of the conclusions adopted, whether unanimously or by majorities. It was hoped that this Report might be unanimously signed, and it was understood that any groups or individuals would be free to append to it such statements as they deemed necessary to give expression to their views. The Draft Report



was circulated on March 30th, and discussed and amended on April 4th and 5th. The accuracy of the narrative was not challenged, though there was considerable difference of opinion as to the relative prominence which should be given to some parts of the proceedings. As time pressed it was decided not to have any discussion upon a Majority Report, nor upon any Minority Reports or other statements which might be submitted. The Draft Report was adopted by a majority, and the Chairman and Secretary were ordered to sign it, and forward it to the Government. A limit of twenty-four hours was, by agreement, put upon the reception of any other reports or statements, and in the afternoon of April 5th the Convention adjourned *sine die*.

"The public is thus provided with no Majority Report, in the sense of a reasoned statement in favour of the conclusions upon which the majority are agreed, but is left to gather from the narrative of proceedings what the contents of such a report would have been. On the other hand, both the Ulster Unionists and a minority of the Nationalists have presented Minority Reports covering the whole field of the Convention's enquiry. The result of this procedure is to minimise the agreement reached, and to emphasise the disagreement. In these circumstances, I conceive it to be my duty as Chairman to submit such explanatory observations as are required to enable the reader of the Report and the accompanying documents to gain a clear idea of the real effect and significance of the Convention's achievement. I may assume a knowledge of the broad facts of the Irish Question. It will be agreed that, of recent years, the greatest obstacle to its settlement has been the Ulster difficulty. There seemed to be two possible issues to our deliberations. If a scheme of Irish self-government could be framed to which the Ulster Unionists would give their adherence, then the

Convention might produce a unanimous Report. Failing such a consummation, we might secure agreement, either complete or substantial, between the Nationalist, the Southern Unionist and the labour representatives. Many entertained the hope that the effect of such a striking and wholly new development would be to induce Ulster to reconsider its position.

“ Perhaps unanimity was too much to expect. Be this as it may, neither time nor effort was spared in striving for that goal, and there were moments when its attainment seemed possible. There was, however, a portion of Ulster where a majority claimed that, if Ireland had the right to separate herself from the rest of the United Kingdom, they had the same right to separation from the rest of Ireland. But the time had gone by when any other section of the Irish people would accept the partition of their country even as a temporary expedient. Hence, the Ulster Unionist members in the Convention remained there only in the hope that some form of Home Rule would be proposed which might modify the determination of those they represented to have neither part nor lot in an Irish Parliament. The Nationalists strove to win them by concessions; but they found themselves unable to accept any of the schemes discussed and the only scheme of Irish government they presented to the Convention was confined to the exclusion of their entire Province. Long before the hope of complete unanimity had passed, the majority of the Convention were considering the possibilities of agreement between the Nationalists and the Southern Unionists. Lord Midleton was the first to make a concrete proposal to this end. The Report shows that in November he outlined to the Grand Committee, and in December brought before the Convention, what looked like a workable compromise. It accepted self-government for Ireland. In return

for special minority representation in the Irish Parliament, already conceded by the Nationalists, it offered to that Parliament complete power over internal legislation and administration and, in matters of finance, over direct taxation and Excise. But, although they agreed that the Customs revenue should be paid into the Irish Exchequer, the Southern Unionists insisted upon the permanent reservation to the Imperial Parliament of the power to fix the rates of Customs duties. By far the greater part of our time and attention was occupied by this one question, whether the imposition of Custom duties should or should not be under the control of the Irish Parliament. The difficulties of the Irish Convention may be summed up in two words—Ulster and Customs.

“The Ulster difficulty the whole world knows; but how the Customs question came to be one of vital principle, upon the decision of which depended the amount of agreement that could be reached in the Convention, needs to be told. The tendency of recent political thought among constitutional Nationalists has been towards a form of government resembling as closely as possible that of the Dominions, and, since the geographical position of Ireland imposes obvious restrictions in respect of naval and military affairs, the claim for Dominion Home Rule was concentrated upon a demand for unrestricted fiscal powers. Without separate Customs and Excise Ireland would, according to this view, fail to attain a national status like that enjoyed by the Dominions. Upon this issue the Nationalists made a strong case, and were able to prove that a considerable number of leading commercial men had come to favour fiscal autonomy as part of an Irish settlement. In the present state of public opinion in Ireland, it was feared that without Customs no scheme the Convention recommended would receive sufficient



measure of support to secure legislation. To obviate any serious disturbance of the trade of the United Kingdom, the Nationalists were prepared to agree to a free trade arrangement between the two countries. But this did not overcome the difficulties of the Southern Unionists, who on this point agreed with the Ulster Unionists. They were apprehensive that a separate system of Customs control, however guarded, might impair the authority of the United Kingdom over its external trade policy. Neither could they consent to any settlement which was, in their judgment, incompatible with Ireland's full participation in a scheme of United Kingdom federation, should that come to pass.

"It was clear that by means of mutual concessions agreement between the Nationalists and the Southern Unionists could be reached on all other points. On this important point, however, a section of the Nationalists, who have embodied their views in a separate Report, held that no compromise was possible. On the other hand, a majority of the Nationalists and the whole body of Southern Unionists felt that nothing effective could result from their work in the Convention unless some understanding was reached upon Customs which would render an agreement on a complete scheme attainable. Neither side was willing to surrender the principle; but both sides were willing, in order that a Parliament should be at once established, to postpone a legislative decision upon the ultimate control of Customs and Excise. At the same time each party has put on record, in separate notes subjoined to the Report, its claim respecting the final settlement of this question. A decision having been reached upon the cardinal issue, the majority of the Convention carried a series of resolutions which, together, form a complete scheme of self-government. This

scheme provides for the establishment of a Parliament for the whole of Ireland with an Executive responsible to it, and with full powers over all internal legislation, administration and direct taxation. Pending a decision of the fiscal question, it is provided that the imposition of duties of Customs and Excise shall remain with the Imperial Parliament, but that the whole of the proceeds of these taxes shall be paid into the Irish Exchequer. A joint Exchequer Board is to be set up to determine the Irish true revenue, and Ireland is to be represented upon the Board of Customs and Excise of the United Kingdom. The principle of representation in the Imperial Parliament was insisted upon from the first by the Southern Unionists, and the Nationalists conceded it. It was felt, however, that there were strong reasons for providing that the Irish representatives at Westminster should be elected by the Irish Parliament rather than directly by the constituencies, and this was the arrangement adopted. It was accepted in principle that there should be an Irish contribution to the cost of Imperial services, but, owing to lack of data, it was not found possible in the Convention to fix any definite sum.

“It was agreed that the Irish Parliament should consist of two Houses—a Senate of 64 members and a House of Commons of 200. The principle underlying the composition of the Senate is the representation of interests. This is affected by giving representation to commerce, industry and labour, the County Councils, the Churches, learned institutions and the Peerage. In constituting the House of Commons the Nationalists offered to guarantee forty per cent. of its membership to the Unionists. It was agreed that, in the South, adequate representation for Unionists could only be secured by nomination; but, as the Ulster representatives had informed the Convention that

those for whom they spoke could not accept the principle of nomination, provision was made in the scheme for an extra representation of Ulster by direct election. The majority of the Labour representatives associated themselves with the Nationalists and Southern Unionists in building up the Constitution, with the provisions of which they found themselves in general agreement. They frankly objected, however, to the principle of nomination and to what they regarded as the inadequate representation of Labour in the Upper House. Throughout our proceedings they helped in every way towards the attainment of agreement. Nor did they press their own special claims in such a manner as to make more difficult the work already difficult enough, of agreeing upon a constitution.

“ I trust I have said enough to enable the reader of this Report and the accompanying documents to form an accurate judgment upon the nature and difficulties of the task before the Convention and upon its actual achievement. While, technically, it was our function to draft a Constitution for our country, it would be more correct to say that we had to find a way out of the most complex and anomalous political situation to be found in history—I might almost say in fiction. We are living under a system of Government which survives only because the Act abolishing it cannot, consistently with Ministerial pledges, be put into operation without further legislation no less difficult and controversial than that which it has to amend. While the responsibility for a solution to our problem rests primarily with the Government, the Convention found itself in full accord with your insistence that the most hopeful path to a settlement was to be found in Irish agreement. In seeking this—in attempting to find a compromise which Ireland might accept and Parliament pass into law—it has been recognised that the full pro-



gramme of no party could be adopted. The Convention was also bound to give due weight to your opinion that to press for a settlement at Westminster, during the war, of the question which, as I have shown, had been a formidable obstacle to agreement would be to imperil the prospect of the early establishment of self-government in Ireland. Notwithstanding the difficulties with which we were surrounded, a larger measure of agreement has been reached upon the principle and details of Irish self-government than has ever yet been attained. Is it too much to hope that the scheme embodying this agreement will forthwith be brought to fruition by those to whose call the Irish Convention has now responded ? ”

Before we proceed to record the Government's action upon the Report, however, it will be desirable, since space has been found in the Appendix only for paragraph 42 of the Draft Report of the proceedings, to give here a *resumé* of the earlier pages. Some of the events recorded by Sir Horace Plunkett have already been noted in the other parts of this book. In paragraph 10 of the Narrative we learn that the Bishop of Raphoe was in October delegated to present the Heads of a Scheme for the consideration of a sub-committee (Mr. Barrie, Mr. Devlin, Lord Londonderry, Sir A. McDowell, Lord Midleton, Mr. W. M. Murphy, the Bishop of Raphoe, Mr. Redmond and Mr. Russell). The Bishop's scheme turned out, in effect, to be a proposal of “Dominion” Home Rule, although the Ulster Unionists in their Minority Report subsequently credited the Bishop with having proposed *co-equal* Parliaments for Ireland and England. The Bishop gave the Irish Parliament power to maintain a Defence Force, power in respect of commercial treaties, complete authority over Finance, Police and Post Office. But he excluded the Army and Navy from Irish interference,

he agreed to an Irish contribution to the Imperial Exchequer, and he suggested restriction on the powers of the Irish Parliament in respect of religious legislation. The sub-committee in considering the Scheme arrived at certain provisional conclusions on most of the Heads (though not on the more important ones), but these provisional understandings were all contingent on full agreement on the general scheme being reached. Lord Southborough subsequently submitted new proposals on the question of finance, but these proposals failed to gain the unanimous assent of the Sub-Committee. The Chairman then intervened and submitted certain questions to the Nationalists and Ulster representatives. He received replies which showed that there could be no basis of agreement, the Ulstermen declaring their opinion that for Ireland and for Great Britain a common system of Finance, with one Exchequer, was a fundamental essential.\* The Grand Committee again took up the task of discussion. Then on the 2nd of January Lord Midleton, before the whole Convention, introduced his compromise, which, in the first instance, took the form of the following Resolution :—

“ That, in the event of the establishment of an Irish Parliament, there be reserved to the Parliament of the United Kingdom full authority for Imperial services, including the levying of Custom Duties, but subject to the above limitation, the Irish Parliament shall control all purely Irish services, including Judicature and Police, with internal taxation and administration.

The differences between Nationalists on the Midleton compromise led, as has been already stated, to the Premier's intervention (letters of February and 21st January\*). During the sessions

\* For the answers of the Nationalists and Ulstermen to Sir Horace Plunkett's queries, see Appendix .

\* For letter of 25th February, see Appendix.

of February 26th, 27th and 28th the Convention considered the views of the Cabinet. On March 5th the resolution of Lord MacDonnell on the Fiscal question was taken up, and on March 12th was carried by a majority of 4,\* whereupon the Convention resumed the consideration of the statement of provisional conclusions reached in the Grand Committee. Mr. Barrie, M.P., presently moved his amendment excluding all Ulster from the power of the Irish Parliament. It was defeated by 52 votes to 19. On the 22nd of March the Convention adopted unanimously the final report of the Sub-Committee on Land Purchase, which contained detailed recommendations for a complete settlement of the agrarian question, under a scheme for recasting the framework of the government of Ireland. It did the same with the Report of the Committee appointed to consider the Question of Housing in Urban Areas in Ireland. Finally, on the 5th of April, 1918, the Chairman and Secretary were, by 42 votes to 35, empowered to submit the Report of Proceedings to His Majesty's Government. There voted in the minority of 35 the 18 representatives of Ulster Unionism, one of the Labour delegates from Belfast and, among the Nationalists, the Archbishop of Cashel, the Lord Mayor of Cork, Mr. T. London, M.P., Mr. J. Devlin, M.P., the Bishop of Raphoe, the Bishop of Down and Connor, and Mr. W. M. Murphy.

We have dealt above at some length, in its proper place in the historical sequence of events, with the Convention's Report. The issue of the Report, however, was made to an Irish public profoundly uninterested in it. The mind of the whole people was fixed on conscription, to the complete exclusion of any other question. Nor was the gathering storm of determined opposition to the proposal to

\* See Appendix, paragraph 42. section 15 ; and division list.



conscript Ireland in any way checked by a certain change in the Government's attitude which was disclosed during the hurried passage of the Military Service Bill through the House of Commons under the "guillotine." The Irish clause of the Bill—Clause II.—gave the Government power to extend the operation of the Act to Ireland by Order in Council. In his speech on the first reading of the Bill on April 9th the Prime Minister announced the Government's intention to use this power immediately upon the completion of the necessary preliminary arrangements. So far as the question of Home Rule—which he insisted was an entirely separate question—was concerned, he merely offered a sort of *ex post facto* justification of the conscription in Ireland in the remark that "when the young men of Ireland had been brought in large numbers into the fighting line, it is important that they should feel that they are not fighting for the purpose of establishing a principle abroad which is denied to them at home."

From these declarations it appeared that the enforcement of conscription in Ireland was an almost immediate certainty, while the production, and still more, the passage of "such proposals for the establishment of self-government for Ireland as in themselves are just and can be carried without violent controversy" was an uncertain possibility relegated to the vague future. During the passage of the Bill, however, the Government's attitude underwent an important change. The Bill, of course, was opposed at every stage by the Nationalist members to the utmost limits that the operation of the "guillotine" permitted. They were joined in this opposition, up to a point, by Liberal and Labour members, as well as by some Unionists. Mr. Asquith, as leader of the Opposition, expressed the gravest doubts of the wisdom of the Government's policy; but in face of Mr. Bonar

Law's declaration that the Government would stand or fall by the Irish clause, the Liberal leader refused to take the responsibility of defeating it. It was known, however, that the Labour Ministers were putting the strongest pressure on the War Cabinet to modify its attitude.

In the speeches of Mr. Barnes and of the Prime Minister on the third reading of the Bill on April 16th the result of this pressure became apparent. It was now clear that, despite Mr. Lloyd George's earlier emphatic assertions to the contrary, Home Rule and conscription for Ireland were, in fact, inter-dependent. These speeches showed that the Government now proposed to bring in a Home Rule Bill immediately, and to stand or fall by it as it had decided to stand or fall by the Irish Clause of the Military Service Bill. Mr. Barnes said that he believed that the Home Rule Bill might be put on the Statute Book before this clause was operative. The Prime Minister explained his position with some clearness, and made it plain in his speech that what concerned him most was not the Irish attitude towards the conscription of Ireland, but the English attitude. "If there is to be trouble in Ireland," he said, "in resisting a measure of this kind"—and he added that he did not doubt for a moment that there would be trouble—"before any measure of a stern character is taken by this country it is essential that the conscience of this country should be perfectly clear. If there is a refusal to legislate after that remarkable Convention, if the only answer that is given to the Convention is conscription and nothing else, let there be no mistake—if there is resistance in Ireland under those conditions there will be an amount of sympathy with the resistance in this country which would paralyze any effort to enforce it. . . . you can face the difficulties in Ireland with a united country behind you, and you

can only get unity when every section of the community feels that full justice has been done to Ireland in procuring for her that measure of self-government which we are ostensibly fighting for for other countries." The Prime Minister went on to say that nothing would help more to secure the full measure of America's assistance, which was vital at this juncture, than the "determination of the British Parliament to tender to Ireland a measure of self-government which would satisfy reasonable American opinion." In these circumstances, he declared, the Government had come to the conclusion that Irish self-government after the Convention had reported was an essential war measure. The conclusion which Sir Edward Carson drew from these speeches was that "it was now clear that no recruits in Ireland were to be conscripted until a Home Rule Bill was passed by the Government." "That," he added, "was handing over Ulster as the price to be paid for conscripting them."

After the passage of the Military Service Bill on April 16th—the Irish clause being carried by 296 votes to 123—the Nationalist Parliamentary Party immediately left Westminster and returned to Ireland. A passive resistance movement was already afoot. On April 13th the Rev. Joseph W. Brady, Administrator of the Cathedral Parish of Armagh, published in the Nationalist Press a letter in the following terms:—"Following the eminent example set us a few years ago by Sir Edward Carson, the priests and people of the Cathedral Parish of Armagh will hold a series of meetings on next Sunday for the purpose of founding a Solemn League and Covenant against conscription. The methods employed, however, will not be those sanctioned by Sir Edward Carson, viz.:—arms, drilling, &c. The constitutional weapon of passive resistance, employed so successfully by



thousands of conscientious objectors in England, Scotland and Wales for years recently, will be quite sufficient, and we have the highest theological authority for its use." At the meeting on the following Sunday a message was read from Cardinal Logue, who wrote :—" I am heart and soul with the meeting at Armagh. Forcible conscription is an outrage on the clergy and people of Ireland. There is nothing for it but passive resistance to it in every shape and form." Cardinal Logue added that he had convened a meeting of the Irish Bishops on April 18th.

On the same day there assembled at the Dublin Mansion House the conference to arrange for united opposition to conscription, which had earlier been proposed in a resolution by the Dublin Corporation. The Government's proposal, it was now clear, had achieved the miracle of Irish unity. Invitations to the conference, over which the Lord Mayor of Dublin presided, were accepted by Mr. Dillon and Mr. Devlin, representing the Nationalist Parliamentary Party; Mr. de Valera and Mr. Arthur Griffith, representing *Sinn Fein*; Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. T. M. Healy, representing the All-for-Ireland League; and Messrs. William O'Brien (Dublin), Thomas Johnson (Belfast), and W. J. Egan (Cork), representing the Irish Trades' Union Congress. During this period, though feeling ran high throughout the country, and public meetings were held and resolutions of protest passed by public bodies daily, there was no disorder—except in Belfast, where a great protest meeting was violently broken up by a body of young Orange shipyard workers, who were, of course, "protected" by their occupation from conscription. The Mansion House conference at once undertook the task of organising the movement of opposition on lines of passive resistance in close co-operation with the Roman Catholic Hier-

archy. At its first meeting, the entrance of members into which was witnessed by an enormous and enthusiastic crowd, the Conference appointed a deputation, consisting of Messrs. de Valera, Dillon, Healy and O'Brien (Trades Union Congress) to wait upon the Hierarchy in session at Maynooth.

After the return of this deputation, and its report on the result of the interview with the Hierarchy, the Conference adopted and issued the following declaration:—"Taking our stand on Ireland's separate and distinct nationhood, and affirming the principle of liberty, that the Governments of nations derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, we deny the right of the British Government or any external authority to impose compulsory military service in Ireland against the clearly expressed will of the Irish people. The passing of the Conscription Bill by the British House of Commons must be regarded as a declaration of war on the Irish nation. The alternative to accepting it as such is to surrender our liberties and to acknowledge ourselves slaves. It is in direct violation of the rights of small nationalities to self-determination, which even the Prime Minister of England—now preparing to employ naked militarism and force his Act upon Ireland—himself officially announced as an essential condition for peace at the Peace Congress. The attempt to enforce it will be an unwarrantable aggression, which we call upon all Irishmen to resist by the most effective means at their disposal." After drafting this declaration the Conference proceeded to discuss the methods to be employed for giving effect to it. It was announced that detailed instructions as to the most effective plans to be pursued would be communicated in due course, and that all the decisions so far reached had been unanimous.

Simultaneously with the issue of this declaration of the Mansion House Conference the Roman Catholic Hierarchy published an important statement in the following terms:—"An attempt is being made to force conscription on Ireland against the will of the Irish nation and in defiance of the protests of its leaders. In view especially of the historic relations between the two countries from the very beginning up to this moment, we consider that conscription forced in this way upon Ireland is an oppressive and inhuman law, which the Irish people have a right to resist by every means that are consonant with the law of God. We wish to remind our people that there is a higher Power which controls the affairs of men. They have in their hands the means of conciliating that Power by strict adherence to the Divine law, by more earnest attention to their religious duties, and by fervent and persevering prayer. In order to secure the aid of the Holy Mother of God, who shielded our people in the days of their greatest trials, we have already sanctioned a National Novena in Honour of our Lady of Lourdes, commencing on the 3rd May, to secure general and domestic peace. We also exhort the heads of families to have the Rosary recited every evening with the intention of protecting the spiritual and temporal welfare of our beloved country, and bringing us safe through this crisis of unparalleled gravity."

The Hierarchy directed the clergy to celebrate a public Mass of intercession on the following Sunday "to avert the scourge of conscription with which Ireland is now threatened." They further directed that an announcement be made at every public Mass of a public meeting to be held on that day at an hour and place to be specified in the announcement for the purpose of administering the following pledge against compulsory conscrip-



tion in Ireland:—"Denying the right of the British Government to enforce compulsory service in this country, we pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal." The clergy were also directed by the Bishops to announce that a collection would be held at an early suitable date outside the church gates for the purpose of supplying means to resist the imposition of compulsory military service.

On the following Sunday—April 21st—the pledge to resist conscription was solemnly administered at public meetings after Mass in every parish throughout Ireland. Centres were then opened for the registering of names. A few days later a Protestant protest against conscription was also circulated through the country. This protest was organised unofficially. The Protestant Archbishops contented themselves with issuing an appeal for recruits, significantly refusing to express an opinion on the application of conscription to Ireland. In the meantime three important events had occurred. In the first place the Mansion House Conference, at its second meeting on April 17th, decided that a detailed statement of Ireland's case with respect to the attempt of the English Government to impose conscription upon the Irish people be prepared for presentation to the world, and the Lord Mayor of Dublin was deputed to arrange to proceed to Washington and present in person a statement to the President of the United States. At the meeting it was also decided that the money collected in each parish for the Irish National Defence Fund should remain in the hands of the priests or other persons locally selected to act as treasurers; that Archbishop Walsh and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, and a third to be named subsequently by them should act as Trustees, and that representative Local Committees of Defence

selected by and from those who signed the National Pledge against conscription should be formed immediately in every parish. The Conference further advised the public to refuse to assist in any proceedings to facilitate the enforcement of the Act, and added the comment that "the question of the local conservation of food supplies was under consideration in view of possible developments."

In the next place, on April 21st, the Nationalist Parliamentary Party held a meeting in Dublin at which it passed a series of resolutions which, after denouncing the Government's proposal, pledged the party to use all its influence and power to defeat any attempt to enforce conscription, and to carry out the decisions of the Mansion House Conference, and set on record the party's opinion that "in the present crisis, the highest and most immediate duty of the members of this party is to remain in Ireland and actively co-operate with their constituents in opposing the enforcement of compulsorily military service in Ireland." Finally, on the same day an All-Ireland Conference, consisting of some fifteen hundred delegates, was held in Dublin under the auspices of the Irish Trades Union Congress "to consider and advise on the best course to adopt to safeguard the position of Labour in view of the introduction of conscription." Mr. William O'Brien presided at this Conference, and in the course of his speech declared that "they were opposed to conscription as Irish labour men because it was sought to be forced on them by a foreign people, and they would be equally opposed to it if it were tried to be forced by an Irish Parliament."

The Conference unanimously adopted the following resolution:—"That this convention of the Irish Labour movement representing all sections and provinces of Ireland pledge ourselves and those whom we represent that we will not

have conscription; that we shall resist it in every way that to us seems feasible; that we claim the right of liberty to decide as units for ourselves and as a nation for itself; that we place before our brothers in the Labour movement all the world over our claims for independent status as a nation in the international movement, and the right of self-determination as a nation as to what action or actions our people should take on questions of political or economic issues. That in view of the great claims on the resources of the National Executive of the Irish Trades Union Congress and Labour Party we hereby call upon the bodies represented here to forward subscriptions for the purpose of enabling them to carry out their campaign against conscription, and pledge ourselves to make it a success. That this Convention calls upon the workers of Ireland to abstain from work on Tuesday next, April 23rd (1st) as a demonstration of fealty to the cause of Labour and Ireland; (2nd) as a sign of their resolve to resist the application of the Conscription Act; and (3rd) for the purpose of enabling every man and woman to sign the pledge of resistance against conscription. Believing that our success in resisting the imposition of conscription will be a signal to the workers of all countries, we call upon all lovers of liberty everywhere to give assistance in this impending struggle."

In accordance with this resolution, April 23rd—the anniversary of the eve of the Rebellion two years before—witnessed a general strike throughout the whole of Ireland with the exception of North-East Ulster and the Great Northern Railway line between Belfast and Dublin. This one-day strike—the first general strike in any country in Western Europe—was completely successful in paralysing the whole of the normal life of Ireland. It was marked by no "incident," but its very re-



straint was an additional demonstration of the strength, solidarity, and determination of organised Labour in Ireland. After this demonstration the work of perfecting the resistance movement was carried on throughout the country under the general direction of the Mansion House Conference, which met from time to time. The East Cavan seat, held by the Parliamentary Party, fell vacant, and efforts were made to avoid a contest, on the ground that a contested election would impair the national unity\* *Sinn Fein*, however, refused to agree to a compromise, and put forward as its candidate Mr. Arthur Griffith.

On May 5th Mr. Dillon and Mr. de Valera appeared on a common platform at a monster anti-conscription meeting at Ballaghaderreen, the chief town of Mr. Dillon's constituency, and at this meeting Mr. de Valera justified the *Sinn Fein* attitude in East Cavan in these terms:—"We have the right unity, the unity of co-operation. The unity of amalgamation would be no unity, and that we cannot have." A few days earlier, in a speech in East Cavan, Mr. Dillon had defended the Parliamentary Party against the *Sinn Fein* policy of abstention. He said that there were three great lines of defence standing between the Irish people and the brutal military application of the Conscription Act. "First, and by no means least, the Parliamentary situation created by the fight of the Irish Party in the House of Commons—a fight which had already borne fruit in the following results: first, all the Radical Press in England, without exception, has declared against the Government's policy, and even the Northcliffe Press is wavering. Secondly, that had it not been from extreme pressure of the Government Whips, and the threat of the Government to resign, the House of Commons would undoubtedly have de-

\* The Party had earlier decided not to enter the Tullamroe division of King's County against *Sinn Fein*.

feated the proposal. Thirdly, that we have secured by that debate the opposition of organised Labour to the conscription proposal, and without the support of organised Labour the present Government cannot continue in existence. The second line of defence is the national union which was achieved by the Mansion House Conference, and which, in my judgment, it would be criminal to break up. The third line is the whole-hearted support of our Prelates, given with a courage and a generosity which will earn the undying gratitude of the Irish people, which has exposed them already to a whirlwind of abuse and vituperation, and has made the resistance of the Irish people absolutely impregnable."

It quickly became apparent that the organisation of resistance to conscription in Ireland was to be used by the opponents of Home Rule to kill the Government's promised Bill, which was in the hands of a drafting committee presided over by Mr. Walter Long. *The Times*, while urging the Government to persevere with both parts of its Irish policy, opened a "No Popery" campaign. Sir Edward Carson, after notifying the Secretary of the Ulster Unionist Council that "it will be necessary to reorganise all the machinery throughout the province which has been in abeyance since the war broke out," in a series of letters to the Press vehemently denounced the proposal to establish Home Rule. "It is evident," he said in one of these letters, "that the situation is so changed (by the Irish opposition to conscription) that the vast body of Irish Southern Unionists no longer support the action of Lord Midleton and the Southern Unionist delegates at the Convention." A general meeting of the Irish Unionist Alliance had, in fact, been invited to express its emphatic disapproval of those delegates' action, but finally broke up after a heated discussion

without reaching any decision. At the close of a letter published on May 8th Sir Edward Carson appealed to Unionist members of the Government and to the Unionist Party "to compel a reconsideration of this matter before we have a fratricidal conflict at a time when our whole energies should be devoted to the prosecution of the war." With this strong pressure being put on the Unionist members of the Government the drafting of the Home Rule Bill made the slowest progress. "Federalism" re-appeared as the solution, and it was evident that the labours of the Irish Convention were in process of being committed to the waste-paper basket. On May 6th it was announced that Viscount French had been appointed Lord Lieutenant in succession to Lord Wimborne. This appointment revived in the Nationalist Press memories of '98 and Cornwallis, and was interpreted as the prelude to military governorship for the enforcement of conscription. Coupled with this appointment, however, was that as Chief Secretary of Mr. Edward Shortt, the Radical member for Newcastle-on-Tyne, who had voted against the Irish Clause of the Military Service Act. A few days later the resignation was announced of Sir Bryan Mahon, Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland.

On the same day on which the appointment of Lord French and Mr. Shortt was announced Sir Horace Plunkett addressed a final appeal to the Government in a letter to the Press. The late Chairman of the Convention wrote:—"At the gravest crisis with which the British Empire has ever been faced the Government have staked their existence upon a two-fold Irish policy, conscription and Home Rule. They cannot achieve both. At the cost of much present bloodshed and lasting hate they might achieve the first, thereby making the second impossible. In my opinion, for



what it is worth, they would fail in the attempt, and have to go leaving both undone. Their successors would then have to find a way out of the worst Irish situation in my memory, which goes back to the Fenian days of fifty years ago, and has had burned into it every agrarian and political agitation since.

"I would not write this did I not believe that even now, at the eleventh hour, it is not beyond the resources of statesmanship to achieve the double purpose the vast majority of both peoples have in view. I believe the Government could not only satisfy the reasonable aspirations of the Irish people at home, but also get them to follow voluntarily the immemorial instincts of a chivalrous race and the example of their kinsmen and sympathisers throughout the United States and the British Dominions. There is one, and only one, alternative to the disastrous policy upon which the Cabinet has embarked, and that is to set up at once responsible government in Ireland. The report of the Convention has shown that they could do this with the support of a large body of Irish Nationalist and Unionist opinion. They should pass through Parliament without delay the necessary legislation as a war measure.

"The present chaos, with its growing bitterness, its utter demoralisation of our public life, and its discredit to British statesmanship, need not be continued while we are waiting for a Parliament. The moment the Bill is passed an Irish Executive, broadly represented and composed of responsible men who would not shirk the burden of their brief authority, should be appointed and given the task of setting up the Parliament as quickly as possible, of promoting voluntary recruiting, and generally carrying on. The Irish people, given their own instrument of government, would quickly show the world what

is their real attitude to this war. It may then dawn upon Englishmen that we have in Ireland no pro-Germans except those they have made, not of *malice prepense* but through incapacity to understand us."

We began this book with Sir Horace Plunkett's definition of the Irish situation as it existed after the Rebellion of 1916. We close it with his definition of that situation as it existed two years later. We ended our "History of the Rebellion" with a question mark. We are fated to end this book, it seems, in the same manner. If it be objected that a record of Irish politics should be brought to a close at such a point, it may be replied that, from the historian's point of view, the introduction of the Government's proposal of Irish conscription, coinciding with the presentation of the Irish Convention's Report, ends finally and very definitely a chapter in the history of Ireland.

## APPENDICES

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### CLAUSE 42.—FROM REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE IRISH CONVENTION.

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42. We have now set out in order the proceedings of the Convention throughout the eight months of its deliberations. The answer to our Reference, is to be found in the following statement. This statement embodies the conclusions arrived at by majorities, full particulars of which will be found in Appendices X. to XIII.

#### STATEMENT OF CONCLUSIONS.\*

##### 1. THE IRISH PARLIAMENT.

- (1) The Irish Parliament to consist of the King, an Irish Senate, and an Irish House of Commons.
- (2) Notwithstanding the establishment of the Irish Parliament or anything contained in the Government of Ireland Act, the supreme power and authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters, and things in Ireland and every part thereof.

*Section carried by 51 votes to 18.*

2. POWERS OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT. The Irish Parliament to have the general power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Ireland, subject to the exclusions and restrictions specified in 3 and 4 below.

*Section carried by 51 votes to 19.*

3. EXCLUSIONS FROM POWER OF IRISH PARLIAMENT. The Irish Parliament to have no power to make laws on the following matters :—

- (1) Crown and succession. (See 1914 Act, sect. 2 (1)).

\* The Statement shows the votes for and against each section and sub-section (where a division was taken).



- (2) Making of peace and war (including conduct as neutrals). (Act, sect. 2 (2) ).
- (3) The Army and Navy.
- (4) Treaties and foreign relations (including extradition). (Act, sect. 2 (4) ).
- (5) Dignities and titles of honour. (Act, sect. 2 (5) ).
- (6) Any necessary control of harbours for naval and military purposes, and certain powers as regards lighthouses, buoys, beacons, cables, wireless terminals, to be settled with reference to the requirements of the Military and Naval forces of His Majesty in various contingencies. (Act, sect. 2 (9) ).

*Sub-section carried by 41 votes to 13.*

- (7) Coinage ; legal tender ; or any change in the standard of weights and measures. (Act, sect. 2 (10) ).
- (8) Copyright or patent rights.

*Section carried by 49 votes to 16.*

TEMPORARY AND PARTIAL RESERVATION. The Imperial and Irish Governments shall jointly arrange, subject to Imperial exigencies, for the unified control of the Irish Police and Postal services during the war, provided that as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities the administration of these two services shall become automatically subject to the Irish Parliament.

*Carried by 37 votes to 21.*

#### 4. RESTRICTION ON POWER OF IRISH PARLIAMENT ON MATTERS WITHIN ITS COMPETENCE.

- (1) Prohibition of laws interfering with religious equality. (Act, sect. 3).  
N.B.—A sub-section should be framed to annul any existing legal penalty, disadvantage or disability on account of religious belief. Certain restrictions still remain under the Act of 1829.
- (2) Special provision protecting the position of Freemasons. (Act, sect. 43 (1) and (2) ).
- (3) Safeguard for Trinity College, and Queen's University similar to sect. 42 of Act.
- (4) Money bills to be founded only on Viceregal message. (Act, sect. 10 (2) ).
- (5) Privileges, qualifications, etc., of members of Irish Parliament to be limited as in Act. (Act, sect. 12).
- (6) Rights of existing Irish Officers to be safeguarded. (Act, sects. 32-7).

*Section carried by 46 votes to 15.*

5. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS. Section 9 (4) of the Act of 1914 to apply to the House of Commons with the substitution of "ten years" for "three years." The constitution of the Senate to be subject to alteration after ten years, provided the Bill is agreed to by two-thirds of the total number of members of both Houses sitting together.

*Section carried by 46 votes to 15.*

6. EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY. The executive power in Ireland to continue vested in the King, but exercisable through the Lord Lieutenant on the advice of an Irish Executive Committee in the manner set out in Act. (Sect. 4).

*Section carried by 45 votes to 15.*

7. DISSOLUTION OF IRISH PARLIAMENT. The Irish Parliament to be summoned, prorogued, and dissolved as set out in Act. (Sect. 6).

*Section carried by 45 votes to 15.*

8. ASSENT TO BILLS. Royal Assent to be given or withheld as set out in Act (sect. 7) with the substitution of "reservation" for "postponement."

*Section carried by 45 votes to 15.*

#### 9. CONSTITUTION OF THE SENATE.

(1) Lord Chancellor	...	...	...	...	1
(2) Four Archbishops or Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church	...	...	...	...	4
(3) Two Archbishops or Bishops of the Church of Ireland	...	...	...	...	2
(4) A Representative of the General Assembly	...	...	...	...	1
(5) The Lord Mayors of Dublin, Belfast, and Cork	...	...	...	...	3
(6) Peers resident in Ireland, elected by Peers resident in Ireland	...	...	...	...	15
(7) Nominated by Lord Lieutenant :—					
Irish Privy Councillors of at least two years' standing	...	...	...	...	4
Representatives of learned institutions	...	...	...	...	3
Other persons	...	...	...	...	4
(8) Representatives of Commerce and Industry	...	...	...	...	15
(9) Representatives of Labour, one for each Province	...	...	...	...	4
(10) Representatives of County Councils two for each Province	...	...	...	...	8

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On the disappearance of any nominated element in the House of Commons an addition shall be made to the numbers of the Senate.

*Section carried by 48 votes to 19.*

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### 10. CONSTITUTION OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

- (1) The ordinary elected members of the House of Commons shall number 160.
- (2) The University of Dublin, the University of Belfast, and the National University shall each return two members. The graduates of each University shall form the constituency.
- (3) Special representation shall be given to urban and industrial areas by grouping the smaller towns and applying to them a lower electoral quota than that applicable to the rest of the country.
- (4) The principle of Proportional Representation, with the single transferable vote, shall be observed wherever a constituency returns three or more members. (Act, sect. 9 (2) ).

*Sub-section carried by 47 votes to 22.*

- (5) The Convention accept the principle that forty *per cent.* of the membership of the House of Commons shall be guaranteed to Unionists. In pursuance of this, they suggest that, for a period, there shall be summoned to the Irish House of Commons 20 members nominated by the Lord Lieutenant, with a view to the due representation of interests not otherwise adequately represented in the provinces of Leinster, Munster, and Connaught, and that 20 additional members shall be elected by Ulster constituencies, to represent commercial, industrial and agricultural interests.
- (6) The Lord Lieutenant's power of nomination shall be exercised subject to any instructions that may be given by His Majesty the King.
- (7) The nominated members shall disappear in whole or in part after 15 years, and not earlier, notwithstanding anything contained in Clause 5.
- (8) The extra representation in Ulster not to cease except on an adverse decision by a three-fourths majority of both Houses sitting together.

*Sub-section carried by 27 votes to 20.*

- (9) The House of Commons shall continue for 5 years unless previously dissolved.
- (10) Nominated members shall vacate their seats on a dissolution but shall be eligible for renomination. Any vacancy among the nominated members shall be filled by nomination.

*Section carried by 45 votes to 20.*



**11. MONEY BILLS.**

- (1) Money bills to originate only in the House of Commons, and not to be amended by the Senate. (Act, sect. 10).
- (2) The Senate is, however, to have power to bring about a joint sitting over money bills in the same session of Parliament.
- (3) The Senate to have power to suggest amendments, which the House of Commons may accept or reject as it pleases.

*Section carried by 45 votes to 22.*

**12. DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN HOUSES.** Disagreements between the two Houses to be solved by joint sittings as set out in Act (sect. 11), with the proviso that if the Senate fail to pass a money bill such joint sitting shall be held in the same session of Parliament.

*Section carried by 45 votes to 22.*

**13. REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER.**

- (1) Representation in Parliament of the United Kingdom to continue. Irish representatives to have the right of deliberating and voting on all matters.
- (2) Forty-two Irish representatives shall be elected to the Commons House of the Parliament of the United Kingdom in the following manner :—

A Panel shall be formed in each of the four Provinces of Ireland, consisting of the members for that Province in the Irish House of Commons, and one other Panel shall be formed consisting of members nominated to the Irish House of Commons. The number of representatives to be elected to the Commons House of the Imperial Parliament shall be on the principle of Proportional Representation.

*Sub-section carried by 42 votes to 24.*

- (3) The Irish representation in the House of Lords shall continue as at present unless and until that Chamber be remodelled, when the matter shall be reconsidered by the Imperial and Irish Parliaments.

*Section carried by 44 votes to 22.*

**14. FINANCE.**

- (1) An Irish Exchequer and Consolidated Fund to be established and an Irish Controller and Auditor-General to be appointed as set out in Act (sect. 14 (1) and sect. 21).

- (2) If necessary, it should be declared that all taxes at present leviable in Ireland should continue to be levied and collected until the Irish Parliament otherwise decides.
- (3) The necessary adjustments of revenue as between Great Britain and Ireland during the transition period should be made.

*Section carried by 51 votes to 18.*

#### 15. FINANCIAL POWERS OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT.

- (1) The control of Customs and Excise by an Irish Parliament is to be postponed for further consideration until after the war, provided that the question of such control shall be considered and decided by the Parliament of the United Kingdom within seven years after the conclusion of peace. For the purpose of deciding in the Parliament of the United Kingdom the question of the future control of Irish Customs and Excise, a number of Irish representatives proportioned to the population of Ireland shall be called to the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

*Sub-section carried by 38 votes to 34.*

- (2) On the creation of an Irish Parliament, and until the question of the ultimate control of the Irish Customs and Excise services shall have been decided, the Board of Customs and Excise of the United Kingdom shall include a person or persons nominated by the Irish Treasury.

*Sub-section carried by 39 votes to 33.*

- (3) A Joint Exchequer Board, consisting of two members nominated by the Imperial Treasury, and two members nominated by the Irish Treasury, with a Chairman appointed by the King, shall be set up to secure the determination of the true income of Ireland.

*Sub-section carried by 39 votes to 33.*

- (4) Until the question of the ultimate control of the Irish Customs and Excise services shall have been decided, the revenue due to Ireland from Customs and Excise, as determined by the Joint Exchequer Board, shall be paid into the Irish Exchequer.

*Sub-section carried by 38 votes to 30.*

- (5) All branches of taxation, other than Customs and Excise, shall be under the control of the Irish Parliament.

*Sub-section carried by 38 votes to 30.*

16. **IMPERIAL CONTRIBUTION.** The principle of such contribution is approved.

*Section carried unanimously.*

17. **LAND PURCHASE.** The Convention accept the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Land Purchase.

*Section carried unanimously.*

18. **JUDICIAL POWER.** The following provisions of the Government of Ireland Act to be adopted :—

- (a) Safeguarding position of existing Irish Judges. (Sect. 32).
- (b) Leaving appointment of future Judges to the Irish Government and their removal to the Crown on address from both Houses of Parliament. (Sect. 27).
- (c) Transferring appeals from the House of Lords to the Judicial Committee, strengthened by Irish Judges. (Sect. 28).
- (d) Extending right of appeal to this Court. (Sect. 28 (4) and sect. 30 (1-2)).
- (e) Provision as to reference of questions of validity to Judicial Committee. (See sect. 29).

The Lord Chancellor is not to be a political officer.

*Section carried by 43 votes to 17.*

19. **LORD LIEUTENANT.** The Lord Lieutenant is not to be a political officer. He shall hold office for 6 years, and neither he nor the Lords Justices shall be subject to any religious disqualification. (See Act of 1914, sect. 31). His salary shall be sufficient to throw the post open to men of moderate means.

*Section carried by 43 votes to 17.*

## 20. **CIVIL SERVICE.**

- (1) There shall be a Civil Service Commission consisting of representatives of Irish Universities which shall formulate a scheme of competitive examinations for admission to the public service, including statutory administrative bodies, and no person shall be admitted to such service unless he holds the certificate of the Civil Service Commission.
- (2) A scheme of appointments in the public service, with recommendations as to scales of salary for the same shall be prepared by a Commission consisting of an independent Chairman of outstanding position in Irish public life, and two colleagues, one of whom shall represent Unionist interests.



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- (3) No appointments to positions shall be made before the scheme of this Commission has been approved.

*Section carried by 42 votes to 18.*

### 21. DEFERRING TAKING OVER CERTAIN IRISH SERVICES.

Arrangements to be made to permit the Irish Government, if they so desire, to defer taking over the services relating to Old Age Pensions, National Insurance, Labour Exchanges Post Office Trustee Savings Banks, and Friendly Societies,

*Section carried by 43 votes to 18.*

43. In conclusion, we have pleasure in recording our high appreciation of the unremitting service rendered to us by our Secretary, Lord Southborough, at every stage of our protracted labours. He has placed at our disposal the wise counsel and ripe experience of a distinguished public servant, and to him and all the members of our efficient Secretariat we tender our cordial thanks.

44. The Chairman and Secretary have the honour, by direction of the Convention, to submit the foregoing Report of its Proceedings to His Majesty's Government.

*Paragraph 44 carried by 42 votes to 35.*

*The whole Report carried by 44 votes to 29.*

SOUTHBOROUGH,  
*Secretary.*  
5th April, 1918.

HORACE PLUNKETT,  
*Chairman.*

## REPORT OF ULSTER UNIONIST DELEGATES TO IRISH CONVENTION.

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1. We, the Ulster Unionist Members of the Convention, find ourselves unable to concur in the Chairman's Draft Report. We protest against its implication that a measure of agreement regarding Irish Self-Government was attained, which in fact was not the case as is evidenced by the record of the Divisions. The provisional conclusions on minor matters which were arrived at in Committee were strictly contingent on agreement on the vital issues. These were fundamental—and upon them no agreement was at any time visible. On many of the important questions the Nationalists were sharply divided. All discussions were “without prejudice” and subject to complete agreement being reached on the whole Scheme. Absolute freedom of action as regards decision in Convention on all points was reserved and this was clearly indicated throughout the proceedings.

2. In confirmation of this statement the following extract from Lord MacDonnell's Memorandum issued to the Convention on 8th March, 1918, may be quoted:—

“It is true that this report does not bind the Grand Committee, still less the Convention, even on the points on which no difference of opinion is recorded, because all the provisional understandings which were arrived at were contingent on a full agreement on the general scheme being reached; and it cannot be said this agreement has been reached.”

3. In order that an accurate estimate may be formed of the origin and purpose of the Irish Convention, it is necessary to recall the political situation as it existed in the early summer of 1917.

4. The Home Rule Act of 1914, to which Ulster was inexorably opposed, had been placed on the Statute Book, in disregard of the truce entered into at the beginning of the war, at which time an Amending Bill excluding Ulster from the Act had passed through its initial Parliamentary stages with general consent and was postponed in consequence of the European situation.

5. Yielding to the demands of the Nationalists, the Prime

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Minister, in a letter addressed to Mr. John Redmond, on 16th May, 1917, offered :—

- (a) A “bill for the immediate application of the Home Rule Act to Ireland, but excluding therefrom the six Counties of North-East Ulster”; or, alternatively,
- (b) A Convention of Irishmen “for the purpose of drafting a Constitution for their country . . . which should secure a just balance of all the opposing interests.”

6. Mr. Redmond refused the first proposal, but acquiesced in the suggestion of a Convention, in which Ulster Unionists were invited to join. On 21st May, 1917, in announcing the Government's intention to summon the Convention, the Prime Minister said: “No one—I want to make this quite clear—by the mere fact of going to the Convention can be assumed to be pledged to the acceptance or the rejection of any particular proposal or method for the Government of Ireland.

7. Ulster Unionists felt some natural hesitancy in sending delegates to the Convention, but relying absolutely on this pledge, and on further pledges given by the Prime Minister and Mr. Asquith, that Ulster would not be forced to come under a Dublin Parliament, they ultimately consented. In taking this course the Ulster Unionists were animated by the desire to do what was best for the Empire, for Great Britain, and for Ireland. They were satisfied with the Constitution under which they had lived and prospered, and they desired to continue under the Union which they still believe to be the form of Government best suited to the needs of Ireland and best calculated to maintain the stability of the Empire. They were ready, however, to consider any plan that might be put forward, provided it would increase the happiness and comfort of the people and at the same time maintain the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament.

8. Ulster Unionists, who have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the war, deplore the fact that in this great world crisis, when their entire energies ought to be devoted to providing men and munitions, they should be even temporarily diverted from vital national issues on which the very existence of the Empire depends in order to again take up a subject the consideration of which had been rightly postponed on the outbreak of hostilities.

9. In view of Ulster's well-known doubts and fears and of the undeniable fact that the declared object of the Convention was to “secure a just balance of all opposing interests” it



was not unnatural to assume that the Nationalists were prepared to offer a *modus vivendi*, and formulate proposals of local Parliamentary government for Ireland which would at least :—

- (1) Provide for the absolute supremacy of the Imperial Parliament ;
- (2) Maintain the existing fiscal unity ;
- (3) Guarantee protection for the undoubted rights of the Unionist minority ;
- (4) Ensure the safety of Irish industrial enterprises, the vast proportion of which are situated in the North-Eastern Counties of Ulster, and from which the bulk of the Irish Revenue is derived.

10. We expected that the real work of the Convention would have been directed to a sincere and patriotic endeavour to find common ground somewhere between the 1914 Act on the one hand, and the views of Ulster on the other. From the first week in which the Convention sat we urged this course, and repeatedly expressed our disappointment that almost every Nationalist speech outlined a form of Home Rule far in advance of any previous claim.

11. The Scheme which was finally brought forward by the Bishop of Raphoe on behalf of the Nationalists included the following demands :—

First—A Sovereign Independent Parliament for Ireland co-equal in power and authority with the Imperial Parliament.

Second—Complete Fiscal Autonomy for Ireland, including :—

- (a) Power of imposing tariffs and control of Excise, involving, as it would, the risk of hostile tariffs against Great Britain and the disturbance of free intercourse between the two countries ;
- (b) Right of making Commercial Treaties with foreign countries ;
- (c) Full powers of direct taxation.

Third—Right to raise and maintain a Military (territorial) Force in Ireland.

Fourth—Repudiation of any liability for the National Debt on the plea of over-taxation of Ireland in the past. Subject to the consent of the Irish Parliament, the principle of a small annual contribution towards Imperial expenditure was admitted.

Fifth—Denial of the right of the Imperial Parliament to impose Military Service in Ireland unless with the consent of the proposed Irish Parliament.

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12. When the Clause claiming Fiscal Autonomy for Ireland was reached, it soon became evident that no real approach towards agreement was possible. At that stage the Chairman endeavoured to get over the deadlock by putting a series of questions to the Nationalists and to the Ulster Unionists, and the replies sent in speak for themselves. The real object of these proposals was clearly apparent in the official reply to the Chairman's queries of 6th November, signed by the following Nationalist Leaders :—John Redmond, the Lord Bishop of Raphoe, Joseph Devlin, George Russell.

13. In this document the Nationalists again emphatically insisted upon their demand for Ireland's fiscal independence, and crystallised their argument in the following terms :—"We regard Ireland as a National, an economic entity. Self-government does not exist where those nominally entrusted with affairs of Government have not control of fiscal and economic policy."

14. It is, therefore, clear that Fiscal Autonomy including the control of Customs and Excise and National taxation is valued by the Nationalists not only on the ground of supposed economic advantage but as an essential symbol of National independence. In opposition to this Ulster takes a firm stand on the basis of the people's common prosperity, and maintains that the Fiscal unity of the United Kingdom must be preserved intact, carrying with it as it does the sovereignty of the Imperial Parliament and due representation therein.

15. The important question of how far Ireland should contribute to Imperial taxation raised much controversy. In the earlier stages of the discussion some prominent Nationalists stated quite frankly that they recognised no responsibility for any portion of the pre-war National Debt, nor for the present war expenditure, whilst we claimed that in justice and in honour Ireland must continue to pay her full share of both. The majority of the Nationalists declined to admit such liability.

16. During the financial year just ended Ireland's Imperial contribution will, it is estimated, amount to about thirteen millions sterling, and possibly to twenty millions next year.

An important section of the Nationalists objected to any Imperial contribution being paid, but the larger number favoured a contribution ranging from two and a half to four and a half millions sterling per annum. It was invariably a condition that the contribution should be purely voluntary and at the pleasure of the Irish Parliament. We listened to these suggestions with keen disappointment, knowing of no reason why Ireland, which is abundantly prosperous, should



not in the hour of the Empire's need contribute her full share of men and money. We have always contended that there should be equality of sacrifice in every part of the United Kingdom.

17. As already pointed out, a further Clause in the Bishop of Raphoe's Scheme with which we found it impossible to agree claimed that compulsory Military Service could not be imposed upon Ireland by Great Britain unless with the consent of the Irish Parliament, and this demand was supported by a majority vote of the Convention.

18. Again, it was claimed that, in contradistinction to the provisions of all previous Home Rule Bills, the Royal Irish Constabulary, a semi-Military Force, should immediately at the conclusion of the war come under the control of the Irish Parliament. The 1914 Act provided that this Force should remain under Imperial control for a period of six years. In the present state of Ireland such a proposal must be regarded as "excessively dangerous." This is the opinion expressed by the Inspector-General of the Force, whose statement appears in the Appendices I.G. 27.

19. Failing any evidence of an approach to a narrowing of our differences, and in view of the new demands made and adhered to by the Nationalists, we were finally forced to declare that in any such scheme of Self-Government for Ireland Ulster could not participate. We cannot overlook the strong probability that the controlling force in such a Parliament would to-day be the Republican or Sinn Féin Party, which is openly and aggressively hostile to Great Britain and to the Empire. During recent months in many parts of Ireland, outside of Ulster, there has been a great renewal of lawlessness, and crime bordering on anarchy, which unfortunately has not been adequately dealt with by the Irish Executive.

20. A most remarkable situation arose in the Convention when a vote was taken on the proposal to adjourn the proceedings until an assurance was received from the Government that they would promptly take effective steps to restore law and order and repress outrage throughout Ireland. Fifty Nationalist Members voted against that proposal, and 33 Members, including the Ulster Unionists, voted for it.

21. A proposal was brought forward, under which, in an Irish Parliament Unionists should have a temporary representation largely in excess of what they are entitled to on the basis of population. While appreciating the spirit of this offer it was felt, after full consideration, that the undemocratic character of this proposal rendered it wholly unacceptable.



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22. [On the Land Question a Report containing valuable suggestions was submitted by the Committee to which the subject had been referred. This Report was unanimously adopted as there was a desire amongst all sections to have the great regenerative scheme of Land Purchase completed without further delay.

23. The Committee appointed to consider the urgent necessity for providing additional Workmen's houses in Urban Districts reported in favour of comprehensive schemes being at once undertaken by the Local Authorities, an Imperial grant in aid to be provided by the Treasury. This Report was also unanimously adopted.

24. We regret that instead of proposals being made to remove our objections, the policy pursued by the Nationalists in the Convention strengthened our opinion that Home Rule would intensify existing divisions in Ireland and prove a constant menace to the Empire. Had we thought that the majority of the Convention intended to demand, not the subordinate powers contained in previous Home Rule Bills, but what is tantamount to full national independence, we could not have agreed to enter the Convention.

25. While firmly believing that Home Rule would be inimical to the highest interests of Ireland and the Empire, Ulster Unionists, with the object of meeting the Nationalists, presented an alternative scheme for the exclusion of Ulster based on lines agreed to by the official Nationalist Party in 1916.

26. The discussions have proved beyond doubt that the aim of the Nationalists is to establish a Parliament in Ireland which would be practically free from effective control by the Imperial Parliament. It is only necessary to draw attention to modern political movements to realise the unwisdom of establishing within the United Kingdom two Parliaments having co-equal powers. All other countries have fought against this disintegrating policy.

27. The Australian States, weary of local commercial disputes, combined in one fiscal unit in which they were joined by Tasmania—an Island much akin to Ireland in the matter of area.

28. The United States of America established, at the cost of much blood and treasure, National unity when the Confederacy claimed, like the Irish Nationalists, the right to set up an Independent Government.

29. With these and other examples before us we cannot

help feeling that the demands put forward, if conceded, would create turmoil at home and weakness abroad.

30. One of the many objections to the Scheme presented in the Report is that it would make the future application of Federalism to the United Kingdom impossible.

31. For the reasons stated we could not accept the proposals put forward by the Nationalists.

32. We desire to record our appreciation of the uniform courtesy and good feeling which characterised the proceedings of the Convention throughout.

HUGH T. BARRIE.

LONDONDERRY.

ABERCORN.

CRAWFORD McCULLAGH.

R. G. SHARMAN-CRAWFORD  
(COL.).

R. N. ANDERSON.

M. E. KNIGHT.

JOHN IRWIN.

JOHN HANNA.

H. B. ARMSTRONG.

J. JACKSON CLARK.

G. S. CLARK.

ROBERT H. WALLACE (COL.).

J. STOUPPE F. McCANCE.

H. GRATTAN MACGEAGH.

W. WHITLA.

JAMES JOHNSTON,

*Lord Mayor of Belfast.*

H. M. POLLOCK.

JOHN McMEEKAN.

*5th April, 1918.*

NOTE BY THE PROVOST OF TRINITY COLLEGE  
AND THE ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH.

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We have not found it possible to vote for the conclusion reached by the majority of the members of this Convention. It involves, in our opinion, either of two alternatives :-

- (1) The coercion of Ulster, which is unthinkable.
- (2) The partition of Ireland, which would be disastrous.

We have more than once put forward a Federal Scheme based on the Swiss or Canadian precedent, which might ensure a united Ireland with provincial autonomy for Ulster, or any other Province that desired it.

This scheme would also be capable of being adapted to some larger scheme of Imperial Federation for the whole British Empire.

J. P. MAHAFFY,  
*Provost of Trinity College.*

JOHN B. ARMAGH,  
*Primate.*



## REPORT BY THE UNDERSIGNED NATIONALISTS.

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1. The object set before the Convention was to frame a Constitution for Ireland within the Empire. This was the first time the Government had assigned such a commission to a body of Irishmen, and we approached the task with a deep sense of the gravity of the circumstances in which the idea of the Convention originated as well as of the responsibility which rested upon us of giving the best answer in our power to a reference of such supreme importance.

2. Though its function was to draft a Constitution, the Convention was not a Constituent Assembly with a direct mandate from the people to plan the form of Government under which they desired to live. Still it might well claim a considerable measure of authority for its proceedings. Except for some important political and labour abstentions it has worthily reflected almost every phase and interest and class in the varied life of Ireland. But there has been no sure means of knowing how far it exhibited the mind and will of Ireland at the present time, even as regards the parties officially represented in it, nor any guarantee that its decisions, independently of suggestions made by the Government, would take effect in law. The Sinn Fein organisation stood altogether aloof.

3. Nevertheless, whatever the difficulties might be, we determined to make the most of the unique opportunity that presented itself when Irishmen of opposing parties were for the first time to come together in a large body to discuss in friendship the future government of their country at a great crisis in the world's history. To co-operate in devising a scheme of National self-government which would satisfy the reasonable aspirations of our fellow-countrymen, and provide adequate safeguards for minorities, was altogether according to our desires. We believed that if a measure giving us full control over our own affairs was agreed to, and given effect to by the Government, the vast majority of Irish Nationalists would accept it and bend their minds to making it a success, and that the good will to the Constitution which had followed self-government in the Dominions would speedily spring up here.

4. Such hopes as were entertained of success in building a worthy edifice from these foundations were strengthened by the preliminary debates of the Convention, which were upon

a high level, and showed a real desire for mutual enlightenment and understanding. It looked as if the gravity of the times, the principles of freedom for which the Allied Nations claimed to stand, the widespread desire for a settlement throughout the Dominions and among our American kindred, and the disastrous consequences of further conflict and disunion, might bring about a spontaneous resolve among all the assembled delegates to establish our country as a free and contented nation within the Empire.

5. These expectations have been only in part realised. The Southern Unionist delegates, abandoning a long tradition of opposition to Home Rule, came forward frankly and fairly to assist in planning a scheme of self-government. We readily acknowledge the patriotism of their action, and we can only regret deeply that on one point, the control of Customs, which we regarded as vital, they could not see eye to eye with us, and thus effect a complete mutual agreement on a Constitution.

6. The Labour delegates also took a very useful part in the deliberations. As a body they were strongly in favour of a measure of self-government for Ireland.

7. On the other hand, the Ulster Unionists, who were in close touch with their supporters in the North, to our great regret did not see their way to give much co-operation in constructive work along the lines which the Convention was following. The objections which they formulated to our proposals would, if given effect to, reduce the Irish Parliament to a low level at the outset. What their view might be in an Irish Parliament is a different matter. Every one of the Dominions contained a minority of citizens accustomed to identify themselves with Imperial interests who predicted a calamity for their country and the whole Empire if self-government were fully conceded. We are confident that the experience of the Convention will tend to remove any such feeling in Ulster; and, in order to make it easy for our esteemed fellow-countrymen to join on fair terms in one Parliament for the whole country, we went so far as to concede them a large measure of additional elected representation in the Irish House of Commons. They would be a powerful and effective element in an Irish Parliament.

8. We realised clearly from the outset that to obtain an agreement upon Home Rule for a United Ireland, and thus fulfil the purpose of the Convention, compromise was necessary. But we also realised that to carry compromise to the point of agreeing to a scheme which, in our judgment, Ireland would not accept from us would be very unwise, apart from our own decided opinions on the right solution of the Irish problem. The truth is, that it is in the control by Irishmen



of the machinery of Irish Government rather than in a reduction of the powers of the Irish Parliament that the best field is to be found for a reasonable compromise. This brings us to the recommendations of our Report.

9. The terms of reference given to the Convention contained the single limitation that the Constitution must be within the Empire.

10. Within the Empire and peculiar to it, there is a form of Constitution, enjoyed by all the self-governing Dominions, which has brought peace, contentment and prosperity to those nations, together with an attachment to the Empire which has grown steadily firmer, even after rebellion and open war. This form of Constitution rests on three main principles—(1) the Imperial Parliament retains full control over all Imperial affairs, foreign relations, the making of peace and war, the Army and Navy. (2) The Dominion Parliament is technically a subordinate one, whose Bills must receive the Royal Assent to become valid, and whose Acts may legally be over-ridden by the Imperial Parliament. (3) Subject to these limitations, the Dominion has unfettered power of national self-government, including full control of all taxation.

11. Ireland is a Nation, and it is upon a like foundation that we believe the Irish Constitution should now be built. There is room for compromise on details, and even on secondary questions of principle, and there is abundant room for compromise of the wisest kind in the form of safeguards for the minorities inside Ireland, without limiting the powers of Ireland as a whole. But we think it essential to abide by the principle that Irish affairs, including all branches of taxation should be under the Irish Parliament.

12. It has often been said in our debates, and outside them, that it would be unsafe for Great Britain to permit an island so near her to have political power resembling in any degree that of the Dominions. As regards national defence, we have allowed a difference to exist; and in the matter of trade there is room for a special arrangement. But, as to the rest, we can only reply that reconciliation between the two countries is made exceedingly difficult unless it can be shown that the British people sincerely believe in liberty for its own sake, and are willing, to apply to Ireland the principle that the supposed military interests of great states shall not over-ride the rights of small nationalities living alongside them. The noble principle of liberty, which has had such a unifying effect in the Dominions during the war now devastating Europe surely cannot lose its virtue when applied to an island near to Great Britain, where mutual interests and intimate commercial relations ought to promise an even closer friendship.



13. While we think, therefore, that any settlement founded on distrust of Ireland will fail in its effect, and that the nearer the Irish Constitution approaches to that of the Dominions the better will be its prospects, we have striven with earnest sincerity to meet the opposition of Unionist minorities in Ireland, and allay their fears with safeguards which do not infringe any vital principle. We take in turn the points where difference has arisen, and the proposals which we make for compromise.

#### CUSTOMS AND EXCISE.

14. The principal point of difference arose on finance. We asked for full powers of taxation. The Ulster representatives wished to reserve all powers of taxation to the Imperial Parliament, and only modified this demand to the extent of allowing to the Irish Parliament some undefined taxing power of its own. The Southern Unionists were prepared to concede direct taxation and Excise to the Irish Parliament, and admitted the reasonableness of Ireland's claim to separate Customs treatment by proposing an arrangement which, in effect, would place a moral obligation upon the Imperial Parliament of imposing lower Customs duties in Ireland than in Great Britain upon articles of general consumption. They could not see their way to go further and allow the Irish Parliament control over Customs. Ultimately they acquiesced in a proposition from the Government that leaves the control of Customs and Excise to the decision of the Imperial Parliament after the war. In an Irish Parliament we have no doubt that many of them would claim the fiscal autonomy which more than one of them advocated in the earlier stages of the Convention.

15. The taxing power so deeply affects the welfare and prosperity of the people, the dignity of Parliament, and the wise and economical administration of the Government, that no part of it could be placed under external control without perpetuating friction with Great Britain and discontent in Ireland. The control of indirect taxation, which determines the course of trade and in normal times produced seventy per cent. of Irish tax-revenue, is of especial importance. Irish Government cannot be financed without drawing largely on these sources of revenue, nor can an equitable balance between direct and indirect taxation be obtained if two authorities instead of one are controlling them. Moreover, the indirect taxes affect articles of general consumption among the mass of the population, including necessities of life.

16. Economically, Ireland is, and always has been, different from Great Britain. It is a much poorer country, and a

country with few manufacturing industries. It has suffered severely from over-taxation under the Union, and urgently needs a separate fiscal system under Irish control. There is not an instance in the world of an island differing so radically from a powerful neighbouring country being united with it under a common fiscal system.

17. No exception can be made in the case of Customs, which, under the present free trade system, comprise the duties on such important articles as sugar, tea, coffee and tobacco. Moreover fiscal systems everywhere are in the melting pot, and there is a likelihood of radical change in the British system. No change could possibly affect Ireland and Great Britain in the same way, and we consider it necessary that Ireland should have the right of guarding her own trade interests and controlling her own trade policy. It may be said with truth that the power of each state within the Empire to control the whole of its own taxation, and especially its Customs, is the very corner-stone of Imperial unity.

18. Federaton is not in view. Even if it were, and Ireland were still intent on retaining control of her Customs, her sea boundary and her distinct national character and economic interests would give her a claim in that respect which no member of a federation anywhere else can advance.

19. It has been said that to give the Irish Government the power of negotiating commercial arrangements with foreign countries will complicate foreign relations and place her in an unwarrantably privileged position. We answer that no such complications arise in the case of the Dominions, and that what we ask for implies, in our own case as in theirs, no diminution of Imperial authority. Any such trade arrangement has to be negotiated through the agency of the Colonial Office, as representing the Imperial Government, in which the treaty-making power alone resides.

20. Another objection was the inconvenience to trade if a Customs barrier were set up and ships were searched for dutiable articles. But the system was in force here until the middle of the last century. It still prevails in trade, not only with America, France, and foreign countries generally, but with the Dominions, the Crown Colonies, and even the Channel Islands. It is, moreover, the only effective means of ascertaining what the true income of Ireland amounts to. The revenue at present attributed to Ireland in respect of tea and other dutiable commodities is official guesswork, founded mainly on the numbers of the population.

21. But the strongest objection made to the control of Customs, an objection urged principally by the Ulster

Unionists, was that it might interrupt free trade between Ireland and Great Britain. They stated that the raw materials of Ulster industry were drawn mainly from Great Britain, which was also the market for much of their finished produce, and that close commercial intercourse was therefore essential. But this is true also of Irish agriculture, for whose products, which are perishable, and are exported in normal times to a greater value than the products of all the Ulster industries combined, Great Britain is at the present time the best and practically the only market. It would be folly to offend our best customer.

22. As both countries are so deeply interested in free access to one another's markets, we believe that mutual advantage would be a surer guarantee of free and friendly intercourse than any legal restrictions. But, in order to meet Unionist fears, we are ready to agree to provisions in the Constitutional Act maintaining free trade between the two countries in articles of home produce, subject to safeguards against dumping, for a reasonable term of years, and thereafter by mutual agreement. This would ensure that if any change became absolutely necessary, owing either to an altered tariff policy in Great Britain, or to any other reason, it could not be made without prolonged deliberation in the Irish Parliament.

23. We desire to recall the fact that in proposing full powers of taxation for Ireland we are not making a new or unsupported claim. The three most eminent financial authorities upon the Financial Relations Commission of 1895—Lord Farrer, Lord Welby, and Mr. Bertram Currie—reported in a powerful reasoned argument, while disclaiming all political prepossessions, that this was the only sound method of solving the question. The Primrose Committee of financial experts, no longer ago than 1911, unanimously and with equal emphasis reported to the same effect, recommending the Irish control of Customs with arrangements for free trade between the two countries. None of the arguments used by these high authorities, after exhaustive investigation, have lost their weight, and some have gained strength.

24. The Act of 1914, which gives Ireland some restricted powers in regard to Customs, contains in Section 26 a distinct guarantee that when Irish revenue had met Irish expenditure for three successive years, the financial arrangements would be revised for the express purpose of increasing the powers of the Irish Parliament over taxation, as well as for settling an Imperial contribution. The condition is now fulfilled. A large balance of revenue over expenditure has been growing for three years, and it can no longer be said that an estimated



deficit justifies any curtailment of Irish control over Irish finance.

25. We fully agree that there should be some regular machinery for ensuring close co-operation between Great Britain and Ireland in commercial and postal matters ; and we, therefore, propose the establishment of a Joint Advisory Commission with power to make agreements and recommendations on these important matters.

#### THE IMPERIAL CONTRIBUTION.

26. A most important financial question is the nature and amount of the contribution to be made by Ireland to Imperial services. The obligation of Ireland to contribute according to her means we accept without question. As to the method, our view is that this is another case where the greatest wisdom would lie in following the Dominion precedent—that is, in making the matter one of voluntary negotiation between the Irish and Imperial Governments, the contribution taking the form of payment for services of an Imperial nature, as by the maintenance of forces for local defence or the provision of ships. Ireland, on her side, would renounce all claim to subsidies or payments of any kind from the British Exchequer. This would make a clean financial settlement. Great Britain would not be exacting what many might regard as tribute. Ireland would wipe out bitter memories of over-taxation and neglect, and face the future not only as a self-reliant country but as a more willing because a more free contributor to the common defence. It must be recognised that if this plan is not adopted and a statutory contribution is to be enforced by law, there is no logical course but to re-open intricate questions of taxable capacity, which will inevitably bring into prominence the over-taxation of Ireland in the past, and will be held to justify claims for compensation.

27. In view of strong Unionist feeling, however, we do not press our views upon the point, and are willing to agree to statutory payment, to be fixed provisionally at the outset and afterwards by agreement between the Imperial and Irish Governments. We only stipulate that the annual expenses of Land Purchase, which must be regarded as an Imperial obligation, though an Irish service, as well as the cost of any defence forces that may be raised and maintained in the future by the Irish Government, shall be set off against the sum so fixed. The same applies, in a large measure, to the Housing scheme. The balance could best be paid in kind by the provision of ships or other war material manufactured in Ireland.

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### LOCAL FORCES.

28. Any settlement which prohibited Ireland, as a matter of principle, from providing military forces for her own local defence in the constitutional manner customary in the Dominions would, in our opinion, be unacceptable. The confidence shown by entrusting her with such a power would, we are convinced, be repaid a thousandfold. But here, again, we have felt it our duty to give way to cautious views, and we propose that the power should remain in abeyance for five years, and should then depend on the consent of the Imperial Conference, upon which Ireland should be duly represented.

29. As regards the question of conscription, we are ready to take it for granted that no attempt would be made to apply it to Ireland without the consent of the Irish Parliament. Any attempt to impose conscription upon a nation without its sanction is utterly impolitic and unjust, and is bound to end in disaster.

### REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER.

30. We preferred that this representation should cease until such time as a Parliament is created in which all parts of the Empire or the Realm could be properly and equitably represented. Until that time we believe that every purpose served by representation could be better served by arrangements for regular and systematic conference between the Irish and British Governments in a permanent consultative council. By sending members to the British Parliament at Westminster, after we have obtained a Parliament of our own, we risk incurring the odium of disturbing the balance of English parties and influencing questions on which we are not concerned, without any security that in matters where Ireland is properly concerned her voice will carry its due weight, since in order to avoid too much dislocation it is necessary to reduce her membership far below the number to which her population entitles her. But in view of the great importance attached by Unionists to this representation, we were reluctant to maintain our opposition, and we accordingly agreed to a delegation of 42 Irish members being sent to Westminster by the Irish Parliament. That is the form of representation at Westminster that will least distract Irish attention from the necessary concentration at home, and least divide the views of our members in London from those of the Irish Parliament.

### SAFEGUARDS FOR MINORITIES.

31. All the points we have hitherto dealt with are concerned with the future constitutional relations between Ireland and

Great Britain, and the powers to be exercised by the Irish Parliament. In regard to safeguards for minorities in Ireland against any misuse of these powers that they might fear, we have gone to extreme lengths in our anxiety to reach a settlement.

32. That political parties will long continue on existing lines seems most unlikely. But we have agreed that an Irish House of Commons at the outset shall have a Unionist strength of 40 per cent. and that the Upper House shall consist of nominated and *ex officio* members, of peers elected by their own order, and of other members elected by their own class. The two Houses would sit and vote together on questions in dispute between them, including Money Bills.

33. These arrangements are intended to give to commercial and industrial interests, and to Unionist views generally, a powerful voice in the final decision of all legislative questions, including financial measures.

34. We are aware that in agreeing to these arrangements we put a severe strain on the Irish democracy, and hazard the adverse opinion of the outside world. But we take the risk on condition that full powers of self-government, especially full economic and financial powers, are entrusted to the Parliament so constituted. We believe the guarantee offered against the wrongful and imprudent exercise of these powers to be needless. But, provided that Irish questions are left to the decision of the Irish Parliament, we trust our countrymen of North, South, East and West to act loyally and patriotically in the interests of Ireland.

35. The nomination of some Members to the Lower House appears to be the only sure and practicable way of providing adequate minority representation for the Southern Unionists. In the case of the Ulster Unionists, who prefer election, we should be willing to agree to securing larger representation for them by arranging for smaller electoral quotas or for any electoral expedient which would effect the desired result. As regards the Ulster difficulty, we know of no other plan which would not impair the efficiency of Parliament and keep in being religious antagonisms which all good Irishmen desire to see ended.

#### CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONS.

36. We propose the establishment of fairly constituted Civil Service Commissions to regulate competitive examinations and advise on all patronage and appointments.



## TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE WAR.

37. So far from thinking that the war should further delay the establishment of an Irish Executive and Parliament, we regard a postponement of these measures as a disaster and their prompt passage into law an advantage which no administrative difficulties should be allowed to thwart. We recognise, however, that the abnormal conditions brought about by the war make it difficult to carry out some of the changes required. We do not think these difficulties ought to be magnified. The advantage gained by proofs of a sincere desire to let the Irish people manage their own affairs will far outweigh disturbance of official routine. But, if it is clearly laid down that any reserved power will be operative immediately after the war, a certain amount of postponement is admissible. What we altogether object to is the postponement of vital questions until after the war. Now is the time to decide them in principle. This makes it impossible for us to agree to any suggestions made by the Government during our deliberations to leave the future of Customs and Excise in complete uncertainty.

38. No doubt it might be difficult to transfer the control of these two services during the war, and we therefore consent to their temporary maintenance under Imperial authority. But a Joint Board should be immediately set up to determine the true revenue of Ireland from these taxes, and to allocate their proceeds, as so determined, to the Irish Exchequer.

39. We do not like to contemplate even a temporary reservation of the Police or Post Office. But, to meet the views of others, we have agreed that the Imperial and Irish Governments may jointly arrange for the unified control of either service during the war.

## LAND PURCHASE.

40. It is an important part of any scheme for the settlement of the Irish question that Land Purchase should be completed on terms equitable alike to landlord and tenant; that the administration should be Irish, and that the full cost of Land Purchase, past and future, should be borne by the Irish Government, on the understanding that it be reckoned as part of Ireland's contribution to Imperial services. Happily, no serious difference of opinion has arisen in the Convention on the proposals framed by the able Committee which dealt with Land Purchase, and we recommend that a measure embodying the scheme outlined in its Report shall be annexed to the Constitutional Act.

## SUMMARY.

41. To sum up, we propose a Constitution conferring powers on Ireland which are strictly consistent with Imperial unity and strictly conform to the limits set by the reference to the Convention.

42. We propose an Irish Parliament with full powers of legislation in all Irish affairs, subject to the religious safeguards contained in Section 3 of the Act of 1914 (the existing disabilities to be removed in the Constitutional Act), and with full powers of taxation, but with no power to make laws on Imperial concerns; the Crown, foreign relations, peace and war, the Army and Navy and other allied matters duly specified.

43. At the same time, we do our utmost to meet the doubts and objections of Unionists by agreeing to the following provisions :—

- (1) Generous additional representation in the Irish Parliament.
- (2) A guarantee for a reasonable period of Free Trade between Ireland and Great Britain in articles which are the produce or manufacture of either country.
- (3) A Joint Advisory Commission to secure co-operation in commercial and postal matters.
- (4) Continued representation in the Imperial Parliament in such a way as to reflect the views of the different parties in the Irish Parliament.
- (5) A fixed statutory contribution to Imperial expenses.
- (6) Independent Civil Service Commissions.
- (7) Suspension for a term of years of the power to raise local defence forces.
- (8) Suspension till the end of the war of the powers over Customs and Excise, with an arrangement to be made by joint agreement for the control of Police and Post Office by the two Governments for a like period.

We also agree to the scheme adopted by the Convention for the speedy completion of Land Purchase, and express our concurrence in the Housing scheme.

## CONCLUSION.

44. Such a Constitution would, we believe, meet with the approval of the great majority of the people of Ireland. It would be accepted by our kindred in the United States and Colonies. It is generous to the Irish Unionists, and good for Great Britain as well as for Ireland. Had it been put into

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operation at the beginning of the war, the World's history might have been very different in these deciding years. Better late than never.

- ✠ J. M. HARTY, *Archbishop of Cashel.*
- ✠ PATRICK O'DONNELL, *Bishop of Raphoe.*
- ✠ JOSEPH MACRORY, *Bishop of Down and Connor.*
  - L. O'NEILL, *Lord Mayor of Dublin.*
  - T. C. BUTTERFIELD, *Lord Mayor of Cork.*
  - P. O'H. PETERS, *Mayor of Clonmel.*
  - JOSEPH DEVLIN, M.P., *West Belfast.*
  - THOMAS LUNDON, M.P., *Limerick East.*
  - T. J. HARBISON, M.P., *East Tyrone.*
  - W. M. MURPHY.
  - H. GARAHAN, *Chairman, Longford County Council.*
  - JOHN BOLGER, *Chairman, Wexford County Council.*
  - JOSEPH K. KETT, *Chairman, Clare County Council.*
  - JOHN McHUGH, *Chairman, Fermanagh County Council.*
  - THOMAS TOAL, *Chairman, Monaghan County Council.*
  - WILLIAM R. GUBBINS, *Chairman, Limerick County Council.*
  - THOMAS DUGGAN, *Chairman, Tipperary (North Riding) County Council.*
  - JAMES MCGARRY, *Chairman, Mayo County Council.*
  - JAMES DUNLEVY, *Chairman, Donegal County Council.*
  - P. J. O'NEILL, *Chairman, County Dublin County Council.*
  - JOHN BYRNE, *Chairman, Queen's County County Council.*
  - JOHN FLANAGAN, *Chairman, Ballina Urban District Council.*



## NOTE BY THE MAJORITY OF THE NATIONALISTS.

1. In order to reach an agreement between Unionists and Nationalists, we do not at this moment desire to press our objection to the fiscal proposals contained in the Prime Minister's letter, as we hold it to be of paramount importance that an Irish Parliament with an Executive responsible thereto should be immediately established, and that, concurrently with the legislation necessary to effect that object, measures should be passed by the Imperial Parliament to provide for the entire completion of Land Purchase and the solution of the Housing Problem.

2. In coming to this decision we are largely moved by the belief that the Government we are helping to establish will be an effective instrument in obtaining for Ireland by general consent whatever further powers her material interests require ; and that the proposal to pay into the Irish Exchequer the full proceeds of Irish taxation, direct and indirect, subject only to an agreed contribution to Imperial expenditure, will give the Irish Government means for internal development, and will prevent the ruinous increase of burdens which would certainly result if Ireland remained liable to the full weight of Imperial taxation, and jointly responsible for the Imperial debt.

3. But since the decision upon Ireland's claim to full fiscal autonomy is only postponed, we, the undersigned, desire to put on record against the time when that decision has to be made, our conviction that, according to all precedents in the British Empire, an Irish Parliament is entitled, and ought to become the sole taxing authority for Ireland, unless and until, in the general interest it sees fit to part with some portion of its financial independence. We hold, however, that in the common interest of both countries there should be a Free Trade agreement between Great Britain and Ireland.

4. We desire to add that we protest most strongly against the suggestion that alternative sittings of the Irish Parliament might be held in some other place than Dublin, and also against the proposal that there should be set up anywhere in Ireland other than in Dublin a complete branch of the Irish administration.\*

\* Lord MacDonnell is unable to participate in this paragraph for the following reasons : this matter was never raised or discussed in the Convention, and without the fullest discussion he abstains from expressing an opinion on it ; Lord MacDonnell is well aware that the proposal would give rise to vehement opposition in Leinster, Munster and Connaught, and probably amongst the Nationalist population of Ulster ; it would certainly impose many hardships upon the great majority of the Irish people ; and would unquestionably be productive of extreme administrative inconvenience. But so strong is Lord MacDonnell's desire to meet all reasonable wishes of the Unionists of Ulster that he feels unable to negative the proposal without having before him the Ulster Unionist views upon the point.

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5. We further hold that, by the Act constituting an Irish Parliament, power should be taken to prevent dumping, and we believe that this could most conveniently be done by prohibiting the export from Great Britain to Ireland, and *vice versa*, of any article which is being sold under the cost of its production. It should be made a duty of the Joint Exchequer Board to enquire into alleged cases of dumping, and action should originate on a report from them.

- M. K. BARRY, *Chairman, Cork County Council.*  
WILLIAM BRODERICK, *Vice-Chairman, Youghal Urban District Council.*  
J. BUTLER, *Chairman, Kilkenny County Council.*  
J. J. CLANCY, M.P., *North Dublin.*  
JAMES J. COEN, *Chairman, Westmeath County Council.*  
DANIEL CONDREN, *Chairman, Wicklow County Council.*  
PATRICK DAMPSEY.  
JOHN DOOLY, *Chairman, King's County County Council.*  
W. A. DORAN, *Chairman, Louth County Council.*  
THOMAS FALLON, *Chairman, Leitrim County Council.*  
JOHN FITZGIBBON, M.P., *Chairman, Roscommon County Council.*  
M. GOVERNEY, *Chairman, Carlow Urban District Council.*  
GRANARD.  
STEPHEN GWYNN, M.P., *Galway City.*  
THOMAS HALLIGAN, *Chairman, Meath County Council.*  
WALTER KAVANAGH, *Chairman, Carlow County Council.*  
MARTIN McDONOGH, *Chairman, Galway Urban District Council.*  
MACDONNELL.\*  
JAMES McDONNELL, *Chairman, Galway County Council.*  
A. B. MACMULLEN, *Chairman, Cork Chamber of Commerce.*  
M. J. MINCH, *Chairman, Kildare County Council.*  
JOHN O'DOWD, M.P., *Chairman, Sligo County Council.*  
CHARLES P. O'NEILL, *Chairman, Pembroke Urban District Council.*  
J. J. O'SULLIVAN, *Mayor of Waterford (1917).*  
T. POWER, *Chairman, Waterford County Council.*  
D. REILLY, *Chairman, Cavan County Council.*  
M. SLATTERY, *Chairman, Tipperary (South Riding) County Council.*  
BERTRAM WINDLE.

## NOTE BY THE MAJORITY OF THE LABOUR REPRESENTATIVES.

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1. We desire to make it clear that we have supported the agreement which has been brought about in the Convention between Unionists and Nationalists, because we believe that self-government is in the best interests of the country, and that a measure giving it effect should be passed promptly into law.

2. We recognise that an agreement could not have been brought about without certain temporary concessions made in regard to the Constitution of the Irish Parliament which we, as democrats and representatives of Labour, regard with strong dislike. But we feel so deeply the necessity of setting up a Parliament in Ireland, in which Labour amongst other interests, may be able to find a place, that we have been willing to subordinate our democratic beliefs to what we conceive to be the highest interests of Ireland.

### SENATE.

3. As to the constitution of the Senate we are still totally opposed to the nominated element believing same should be elected on a democratic vote if Labour is to be given a chance to be represented in that body by its own choice. So strongly do we feel on this point that we are prepared to recommend our fellow workmen not to accept nomination to the chamber.

4. As a compromise we are prepared to agree with the nominations as outlined in Head 9, sub-heads (1) to (5).

### HOUSE OF COMMONS.

5. We are of opinion that the elected members of the Irish House of Commons, like the members of the Imperial House of Commons, and of the principal Legislatures in the British Dominions, should receive a salary which we suggest should be at the rate of £400 per annum.

### FRANCHISE.

6. We are of opinion that the Representation of the People Act, 1918, should continue to be the law governing the franchise in Ireland.

JAMES McCARRON.

HENRY T. WHITLEY.

ROBERT WAUGH.

JOHN MURPHY.

CHARLES MCKAY.



## NOTE BY SOUTHERN UNIONISTS.

We think it necessary to add to the Report of the Proceedings of the Convention a brief statement of our position, because the Resolution introduced by us on January 2nd, 1918, was, owing to circumstances, not brought to a decision.

1. We desire to record our unaltered conviction that the Legislative Union provides the best system of government for Ireland, but having entered the Convention on an appeal from H. M. Government, based on high considerations of Allied and Imperial interests which it was impossible to disregard, we have endeavoured to assist the Convention in devising a Constitution which would meet the aspirations for self-government within the Empire long held by a great majority of the Irish people.

2. We believe that an Irish Parliament can only be established with safety to Imperial interests and security for the minority in Ireland, by the participation of Irishmen of various classes and creeds in the government which is rendered possible by the safeguards agreed with practical unanimity by the Convention and for which no provision was made under the Act of 1914.

3. We regard the following points as vital to any satisfactory settlement, and our action must be subject to these conditions :

- (1) That Ireland occupy the same position as other parts of the United Kingdom in any scheme for the Federation of the Empire or the United Kingdom.
- (2) That all Imperial questions and services, including the levying of Customs Duties, be left in the hands of the Parliament of the United Kingdom.
- (3) That Ireland send representatives to Westminster.
- (4) That the whole of Ireland participate in any Irish Parliament.
- (5) That the safeguards in the Report agreed to by the Convention be established.
- (6) That an adequate contribution be made by Ireland to Imperial services.

Our lamented colleague, Sir Henry Blake, expressed by letter in January last his concurrence with us on the above points

(Signed)

MIDLETON.

EDWARD H. ANDREWS.

DESART

JOHN DUBLIN.

WILLIAM GOULDING.

ANDREW JAMESON.

MAYO.

ORANMORE AND BROWNE.

J. B. POWELL.

GEO. F. STEWART.

I desire to associate myself with the above, with the exception of paragraph 1.

(Signed)

DUNRAVEN.

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S LETTER OF 25TH FEBRUARY  
1918.

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10 DOWNING STREET,  
LONDON, S.W.,  
25th February, 1918.

DEAR SIR HORACE PLUNKETT,

I had the privilege of discussing, during the last three weeks, the situation in the Irish Convention with the delegates whom the Convention appointed to confer with the Government. You will allow me to thank the Convention for sending over a delegation so representative of all groups of opinion within the Convention. The Government have thereby been enabled to learn the views of different parties, and to appreciate better than would otherwise have been possible the position that has now been reached within the Convention. I regret that the urgency of questions vital to the immediate conduct of the war has protracted the meetings with various groups longer than it was hoped would be necessary, but I am confident the Convention will recognise the exceptional circumstances of the time and will understand there has been no avoidable delay.

The conclusion to which the Government have come as a result of their interviews with the representatives of the Convention may be stated as follows :—

The Government are determined that, so far as is in their power, the labours of the Convention shall not be in vain. On receiving the report of the Convention, the Government will give it immediate attention and will proceed with the least possible delay to submit legislative proposals to Parliament. They wish, however, to emphasise the urgent importance of getting a settlement in and through the Convention. The Convention has been brought together to endeavour to find a settlement by consent. If the Convention fails to secure this, the settlement of the question will be much more difficult, but it will be a task incumbent on the Government. It is, therefore, of the highest importance both for the present situation and for future good relations in and with Ireland that the settlement should come from an Irish assembly, and from mutual agreement among all parties. To secure this there must be concessions on all sides. It has been so in every Convention, from that of the U.S.A. to that of South Africa.

There is, however, a further consideration which has an

important bearing on the possibilities of the present situation. During the period of the war it is necessary to proceed as far as possible by agreement. Questions on which there is an acute difference of opinion in Ireland or in Great Britain must be held over for determination after the war. At the same time it is clear to the Government, in view of previous attempts at settlement, and of the deliberations of the Convention itself, that the only hope of agreement lies in a solution which, on the one side, provides for the unity of Ireland under a single Legislature with adequate safeguards for the interests of Ulster and the Southern Unionists, and, on the other, preserves the well-being of the Empire and the fundamental unity of the United Kingdom.

It is evident that there is on the part of all parties in the Convention a willingness to provide for and safeguard the interests of the Empire and of the United Kingdom. A settlement can now be reached which will reserve by common consent to the Imperial Parliament its suzerainty, and its control of Army, Navy, and Foreign Policy and other Imperial services, while providing for Irish representation at Westminster, and for a proper contribution from Ireland to Imperial expenditure. All these matters are now capable of being settled within the Convention on a basis satisfactory both to the Imperial Government and to Ireland.

There remains, however, the difficult question of Customs and Excise. The Government are aware of the serious objections which can be raised against the transfer of these services to an Irish Legislature. It would be practically impossible to make such a disturbance of the fiscal and financial relations of Great Britain and Ireland in the midst of a great war. It might also be incompatible with that federal re-organisation of the United Kingdom in favour of which there is a growing body of opinion. On the other hand, the Government recognise the strong claim that can be made that an Irish Legislature should have some control over indirect taxation as the only form of taxation which touches the great majority of the people, and which in the past has represented the greater part of Irish revenue.

The Government feel that this is a matter which cannot be finally settled at the present time. They therefore suggest for the consideration of the Convention that, during the period of the war and for a period of two years thereafter, the control of Customs and Excise should be reserved to the United Kingdom Parliament; that, as soon as possible after the Irish Parliament has been established, a Joint Exchequer Board should be set up to secure the determination of the true revenue of Ireland—a provision which is essential to a system of responsible Irish Government and to the making of a



national balance sheet, and that, at the end of the war, a Royal Commission should be established to re-examine impartially and thoroughly the financial relations of Great Britain and Ireland, to report on the contribution of Ireland to Imperial expenditure, and to submit proposals as to the best means of adjusting the economic and fiscal relations of the two countries.

The Government consider that during the period of the war the control of all taxation other than Customs and Excise could be handed over to the Irish Parliament; that, for the period of the war and two years thereafter an agreed proportion of the annual Imperial expenditure should be fixed as the Irish contribution; and that all Irish revenue from Customs and Excise as determined by the Joint Exchequer Board, after deduction of the agreed Irish contribution to Imperial expenditure, should be paid into the Irish Exchequer. For administrative reasons, during the period of the war it is necessary that the Police should remain under Imperial control and it seems to the Government to be desirable that for the same period the Postal service should be a reserved service.

Turning to the other essential element of a settlement—the securing of an agreement to establish a single Legislature for an united Ireland—the Government believe that the Convention has given much thought to the method of overcoming objection on the part of Unionists, North and South, to this proposal. They understand that one scheme provides for additional representation by means of nomination or election. They understand further that it has also been suggested that a safeguard of Ulster interests might be secured by the provision of an Ulster Committee within the Irish Parliament, with power to modify, and if necessary to exclude, the application to Ulster of certain measures either of legislation or administration which are not consonant with the interests of Ulster. This appears to be a workable expedient, whereby special consideration of Ulster conditions can be secured and the objections to a single Legislature for Ireland overcome.

The Government would also point to the fact that it has been proposed that the Irish Parliament should meet in alternate sessions in Dublin and Belfast, and that the principal offices of an Irish Department of manufacturing industry and commerce should be located in Belfast. They believe that the willingness to discuss these suggestions is clear evidence of the desire to consider any expedient which may help to remove the causes of Irish disunion. The fact that, in order to meet the claims of different parts of the community, the South African Convention decided that the Legislature was to be established in Cape Town, the Administrative Departments to be situated in Pretoria, and the Supreme Court was to sit in

Bloemfontein, is a proof that proposals such as these may markedly contribute to eventful agreement.

Finally, the Government have noted the very important Report which has been prepared on the subject of Land Purchase and on which an unanimous conclusion has been reached by the Committee of the Convention set up to consider this subject. If this Report commends itself to the Convention, the Government would be prepared to introduce in Parliament as part of the plan of settlement (and simultaneously with the Bill amending the Government of Ireland Act, 1914) a measure for the purpose of enabling Parliament to give effect to the recommendations of the Convention on the subject of Land Purchase. The Government have also had submitted to them by the Labour representatives in the Convention the need of provision for dealing with the urgent question of housing in Ireland, and on receiving recommendations from the Convention on the subject they would be prepared to consider the inclusion in the scheme of settlement of a substantial provision for immediately dealing with this vital problem.

There thus seems to be within the reach of the Convention the possibility of obtaining a settlement which will lay the foundation of a new era in the government both of Ireland and of Great Britain. It is a settlement which will give to Irishmen the control of their own affairs, while preserving the fundamental unity of the United Kingdom, and enabling Irishmen to work for the good of the Empire as well as for the good of Ireland. With all the earnestness in their power the Government appeal to the members of the Convention to agree upon a scheme which can be carried out at once and which will go a long way towards realising the hopes of Irishmen all over the world, without prejudice to the future consideration of questions on which at present agreement cannot be attained in Ireland and which are also intimately connected with constitutional problems affecting every part of the United Kingdom, the consideration of which must be postponed till the end of the present war. This is an opportunity for a settlement by consent that may never recur, and which, if it is allowed to pass, must inevitably entail consequences for which no man can wish to make himself responsible.

Yours sincerely,

D. LLOYD GEORGE.

THE DIVISION ON CUSTOMS AND EXCISE,  
MARCH 12, 1918.

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*FOR* (38).

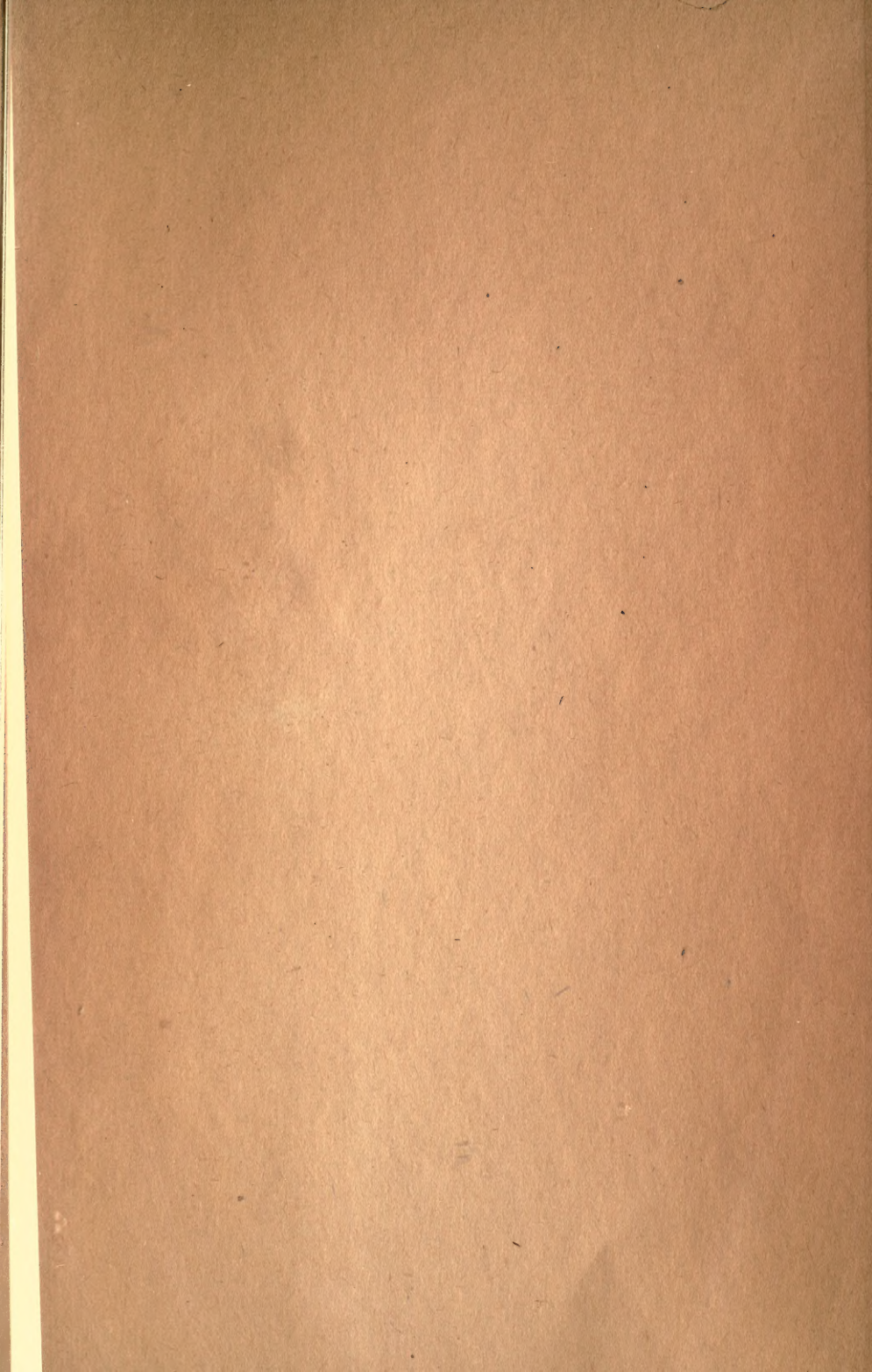
E. H. Andrews.  
W. Broderick.  
J. J. Coen.  
D. Condren.  
Earl of Desart.  
J. Dooley.  
Captain Doran.  
Archbishop of Dublin.  
T. Fallon.  
J. Fitzgibbon.  
Sir W. Goulding.  
Earl of Granard.  
Captain Gwynn.  
T. Halligan.  
A. Jameson.  
W. Kavanagh.  
J. McCarron.  
M. McDonogh.  
J. McDonnell.  
Lord MacDonnell.  
C. McKay.  
A. R. MacMullen.  
Earl of Mayo.  
Viscount Midleton.  
J. Murphy.  
J. O'Dowd.  
C. P. O'Neill.  
Lord Oranmore and Browne.  
Dr. O'Sullivan.  
J. B. Powell.  
T. Power.  
Provost of Trinity College.  
Sir S. B. Quin.  
D. Reilly.  
M. Slattery.  
G. F. Stewart.  
H. T. Whitley.  
Sir B. Windle.

*AGAINST* (34).

Sir R. N. Anderson.  
Archbishop of Armagh.  
H. B. Armstrong.  
H. T. Barrie.  
Lord Mayor of Belfast.  
J. Bolger.  
Archbishop of Cashel.  
Sir G. Clark.  
Colonel J. J. Clark.  
Lord Mayor of Cork.  
Col. Sharman-Crawford.  
J. Devlin.  
Bishop of Down and Connor.  
T. Duggan.  
H. Garahan.  
William Gubbins.  
J. Hanna.  
J. K. Kett.  
M. E. Knight.  
Marquis of Londonderry.  
T. London.  
J. S. F. McCancee.  
Sir C. McCullagh.  
J. McGarry.  
H. G. MacGeagh.  
J. McHugh.  
Moderator General Assembly  
W. M. Murphy.  
P. J. O'Neill.  
P. O'H. Peters.  
H. M. Pollock.  
Bishop of Raphoe.  
T. Toal.  
Sir W. Whitla.











WELLS, W.B.

DA  
962

The Irish convention  
and Sinn Fein.

.W42

DATE

ISSUED TO

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962  
.W42

The Irish convention and  
Sinn Fein.



